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The British Documentary-Realist Film Tradition from the 1930s to the 1970s

Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica do Prof. Doutor Anthony Barker, Professor Associado do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro

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Contents

Resumo

O presente trabalho debruça-se sobre os desenvolvimentos no filme documental na Grã-Bretanha e a sua influência na tradição do filme realista social Britânico. Esta dissertação ocupa-se do período compreendido entre 1930 e finais de 1970, numa tentativa de definição desta tradição e do realçar da sua importância como a mais válida da cinematografia Britânica. O livro é composto por uma análise dos filmes e realizadores mais importantes desta tradição, sem deixar de lado uma incursão nos desenvolvimentos sociais e políticos ocorridos durante este período de tempo na Grã--Bretanha; por uma lista das obras citadas e por uma filmografia seleccionada.

Abstract

This work deals with the early developments in Documentary filmmaking in Britain, and how it influenced the films that belong to the British Documentary-Realist film tradition. This dissertation runs from the 1930s to the 1970s in a drive to investigate and define this tradition as the most valid in British filmmaking. The book comprises a study of key films and directors of this tradition not forgetting the socio-political developments in British society, a works cited list and a selected filmography of the films discussed.

Introduction

Film production and national identity are intimately connected and it is a subject prone to much debate, essentially because the world market is dominated by Hollywood film productions. Taking this factor into account, it is clear why many European countries struggle to maintain a national film industry. This strategy has been more successful in some countries than others, but virtually every Western European country tries to support a native film industry.

The situation in Great Britain is somewhat different from other European countries. Hollywood films have a bigger market share, and this, undoubtedly, is facilitated by the non-existence of the language barrier. Andrew Higson, in *Waving the Flag* identifies three different reactions towards Hollywood film production in Britain. Firstly, there is a tradition of cooperation with big Hollywood production companies and the establishment of American distribution companies in Britain. This leads to increasing market dominance by American films (9-10). Secondly, there is a policy of direct competition, with the creation of a strong local industry capable of supporting national films (10). Thirdly, there is "the possibility of product differentiation" (10), which concentrates on making small-budget films with indigenous appeal. This possibility has thrown up two genres: the popular comedy and the art film. In respect of art film, Higson writes that "There have been two relatively sustained and in many ways quite distinct attempts to create an art cinema in Britain, in the form of the heritage genre and the documentary-realist tradition" (11).

Of these two attempts, probably the better known is the heritage genre concerning big-scale recreations of historical dramas or literary adaptations. Certainly, the international recognition achieved by heritage films can be traced to the great success achieved by the BBC's productions, almost unanimously acclaimed as quality productions. These films tend to celebrate a unified and unproblematic view of a golden Edwardian age of a ruralist and traditional England[1]. The purpose of this work is to trace a genealogy of and investigate the other attempt: the documentary-realist tradition, and, subsequently, to reassess its value as a valid and ongoing practice of British film production. This tradition appears as more challenging of conventional views than the heritage film and it upholds

[1] For a thorough discussion of these topics see, Andrew Higson, "The Instability of the National" in Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson . Eds. (*British Cinema, Past and Present*. Routledge: London and New York, 2000) 35-47.
And also, Amy Sergeant "Making and Selling Heritage Culture: Style and Authenticity in Historical Fictions on Film and Television" in Ashby and Higson, op. cit. 301-315.

socially progressive ideas. Andrew Higson in "Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film" writes that:

> Within this context, cinema is appropriated as the ideal means of mass communication and education: it is appropriated, then, for a social-democratic project. […] The documentary idea constructs cinema as a means of communication, not a medium of entertainment (74).

In recent years the interest in the documentary-realist tradition has been increasing exponentially. Some serious scholarly work has moved from specialised academic film journals, such as *Screen*, to books available to films enthusiasts around the world. By the analyses of the early developments of this tradition in the 1930s to its consolidation in the 1970s, this work will try to establish the importance of this tradition to a development of a legitimate and powerful strand of British filmmaking.

The work will take a chronological approach towards its enquiry into the various developments in the documentary-realist tradition from the 1930s to the 1970s and its repercussions for film today. The first chapter offers a survey of the first documentary film productions around the world and, then assesses John Grierson's and the Documentary Movement's importance in the establishment of the tradition. The first chapter also deals with Humphrey Jennings's importance in the consolidation of documentary film production and its intersection with fiction filmmaking during the Second World War. The second chapter deals with the post-war dissent in British society that lead to the creation of the Angry Young Men literary phenomenon and its connections with the Free Cinema collective of documentary filmmakers that went into fiction film production, thus creating a British New Wave. The third chapter discusses the importance television drama had on the consolidation of this tradition mainly through the work of Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. Finally, the conclusion surveys the influences that the previous films and directors have had on contemporary filmmakers and reviews Ken Loach's and Mike Leigh's career from the 1980s into the 1990s.

This work is also interested in the clarification of definitions of "realism" in filmmaking and how these films bear out the definitions or not, a subject that is often discussed in a simplistic manner and accordingly therefore remained elusive. In "From the New Wave to 'Brit-Grit' ", John Hill addresses this problem, writing that:

> Actual realist practices, however, depend upon the employment of conventions which audiences are prepared to accept (by whatever standards) as 'realistic'. The capacity to signify 'realism', therefore, is not intrinsic to any particular set of conventions but is relative to the social and artistic circumstances in which they are employed (250).

This work will try to circumscribe the social and artistic conditions that have made it possible to attach the "realist" tag to the films examined. Connected with notions of "realism" is the documentary practice, and one of the purposes here is to identify documentary-style systems in fiction films.

I. Early Developments in Documentary Filmmaking

When Louis Lumière privately demonstrated his new invention, the *cinématographe* in March 1895, by showing *La Sortie des Usines*, it had the shock of seeming to place life itself upon a screen. Erik Barnouw described the effect this way: "The familiar, seen anew in this way, brought astonishment" (7). Lumière may have acted out of handiness or from insight when he chose to film his own workers leaving the Lumière bicycle factory for his demonstration. Viewers could verify that what they now saw on a screen was what they could have already seen in reality. If there was a trick, it was the trick of appearing to duplicate reality. What could have been more tremendously convincing of the powers of the *cinématographe* than to see something already recognizable and familiar represented in a totally unusual but remarkably recognizable manner?

Clearly, a central aspect of the early fascination with cinema was the ability to identify the world we already inhabit. The extraordinary power of the stills camera to take slices of reality and freeze them within an illusionistic structure rose exponentially in this remarkable succession of cinematographic images that restored motion, and life, to the frozen image. The living, seemingly embalmed on a strip of film, suddenly came back to life, repeating actions and restoring events that had, until that moment, belonged to the domain of the irreversible: the past. In *For Documentary*, Dai Vaughan cites the legend about the first film viewers that dodged away when seeing a train "coming out" of the screen towards them. For Vaughan, "the particular combination of visual signals had had no previous existence *other* than as signifying a real train pulling into a real station" (2), thus illustrating the ontological bewilderment experienced by cinema's pioneer spectators.

The representation of workers begun perhaps inadvertently by Lumière remained central to the tradition of social representation in the Soviet Union but seldom elsewhere. The extraordinary range of works by Esfir Shub, *The Fall of the Romanov Empire* (1927) and Dziga Vertov, *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and with his pamphlet "Kino Pravda" (1922-5) as well as works sometimes criticized for their reliance on staged situations such as Eisenstein's *Strike (*1925) or *Battleship Potemkin* (1926), all belong to a range of cinematic possibility that gradually became marginalized or suppressed by mainstream documentary.

This act of suppression is nowhere more evident than in the fate of the workers' newsreels produced in a number of countries from approximately 1928 to 1939. These

American, European, and Japanese counterparts to the newsreel work of Dziga Vertov, produced by the U.S.'s Workers' Film and Photo League, The Association for Popular Culture in the Netherlands, the Popular Association for Film Art in Germany, and the Proletarian Film League (Prokino) in Japan, are typically neglected in histories of the documentary. With the example of the Soviet pioneers only poorly known elsewhere, workers newsreels usually considered themselves as alternatives to the commercial newsreel makers such as *The March of Time* (1935) in the United States or those produced by Polygoon in Holland. The basic strategy was either to re-edit (and sometimes add new intertitles to) commercial newsreels to change their point of view, or to present footage of more specifically working-class issues and topics. As such, these political newsreels and documentaries often had to resolve a tension between reporting topical events and analysing basic social contradictions.

As Dudley Andrew argues in *Concepts in Film Theory*, "Every documentary relies on our faith in its subject and, more important, utilizes our knowledge of it" (45). That is, documentary begins with the viewer's recognition of images that represent or refer back to the historical world. To this, filmmakers add their own voice, or perspective, by various means. Documentary therefore occupies a complex zone of representation in which the art of observing, responding, and listening must be combined with the art of shaping, interpreting, or arguing. Viewers came to realize that what they see when they see a documentary is a complex, often semi-visible mixture of the historically real and the discursively constructed. The re-presentation of the historical world combined with the distinctive voice of the filmmaker began to give the domain of documentary a use-value that drew the attention of politicians and governments, poets and adventurers. It was possible not only to represent reality, but also to give audiences a view of the world that had never been seen in quite the same way before, making it possible to establish film as a kind of visual pamphlet

This possibility gave way to a cinematic version of a twentieth-century anthropological impulse. The most famous example of a documentary film with anthropological characteristics is Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922). In this film Flaherty depicted the life of an Inuit family and its daily struggle to survive. The film has a documentary attitude towards its subject; it wants to show the diverse aspects of life in Alaska. Nonetheless, this raises the problems of exoticism and folklore representation of

other cultures, problems that still surface in documentaries of today, for instance, as in where to draw the line between representation and exploitation. It can be argued that this film builds a mythic story, for in Flaherty's romantic voice, Nanook becomes the first "star" of the documentary film, and its tale of struggle against nature becomes the documentary equivalent of the folkloric and classic Hollywood tale of a hero's quest against obstacles and adversity.

For all its seriousness, *Nanook of the North* continued to employ more disreputable features of cinema usually associated with the entertainment film, namely the pleasures and fascination of film as spectacle. Thus at the same time that photography and cinematography opened up new vistas for visual pleasures, they also posed the dilemma of vision for spectacle or for knowledge, a division between a subjective and experiential engagement with the seen and an objective and intellectual appraisal. Flaherty's documentary shows these strains, for the supposed purpose of informing is always connected with the viewer's fascination with an unfamiliar subject. The entertaining factor has shifted from the representations of familiar situations and locations to exotic and different places. Moreover, Flaherty did not seem to want to escape the portrayal of the Inuit people as primitive and uncivilized. His attitude towards the people he filmed is heavily criticized by Brian Winston in *Claiming the Real*, "Flaherty was a child of the last age of imperial expansion, and beneath the veneer of sympathy and understanding for the peoples he filmed there is nothing but the strong whiff of paternalism and prejudice" (20). Paul Rotha also addresses Flaherty's attitude towards native people in his biography of Flaherty: "When making *Moana*, he had cultivated the idea that the islanders on Savaii should regard him as the Big White chief. Only if they revered him and respected him could he get them to do what he wanted (169)". This attitude can be found in the relations that the Inuit seemed to have with land, as Brian Winston suggests, "Thus the Native American symbiosis with the land becomes, in *Nanook*, an adversarial and exploitative relationship, just like Flaherty's" (21). Even worse, Nanook's family life is depicted in the same manner as any bourgeois Western family; the role of the second wife, Cunayou is never explained and it is difficult to see her as Nanook's wife. One scene particularly can be seen as problematic: Nanook is mesmerized and fascinated by a gramophone, thus emphasizing his "primitiveness". It can be argued that what disturbs more the viewer is the oddness of this particular scene in the context of a film portraying Nannook's struggle with

nature or perhaps, this can read as being part of the need Flaherty had to fulfil the viewers' expectations; that is, Nanook comes from an "exotic" culture other than the supposed viewers, thus Nanook's unfamiliarity with modern Western technology needs to be emphasised. Another way of perceiving this problem is connecting Nanook's (constructed?) awe with Western technology to the common habit of depicting people from non-western cultures as naïve, innocent and somewhat dim.

Another recurring criticism of Flaherty's work is his lack of respect for the lives of the people that appeared in his films, since he had no qualms in exposing them to danger in order to get a good shot. This situation leads us to the staging of the scenes that appear not only in *Nanook of the North*, but also in *Moana* (1932) and in *Man of Aran* (1934). This situation was very common, not only for practical and economical reasons, but also because of the need the filmmakers had to heighten the dramatic tension of some scenes. This process can be read as a form of validation of a specific task, as we will see later, but is a fatal blow to the claims of "pure realism" which were a naïve part of its initial premises. Not only did filmmakers like Flaherty have to select what and who to represent, but they also had to make these representations more exciting and appealing to their audiences.

1. John Grierson and the Documentary Movement: the belief on the social progressiveness of the non-fiction film

John Grierson claimed, "*Moana*, being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth, has documentary value"[2] (xv). It is now generally accepted that this was the first time that the word "documentary" was used in relation to filmmaking and, in this fashion, entered our critical language. Grierson is now recognised as one of the main exponents of documentary filmmaking, because of his efforts as coordinator and producer of hundreds of films, first in the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), and then for the General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit.

In 1926, Grierson won a fellowship to study "Immigrant's problems in the United States", but he decided to do research on "Public opinion – social psychology". As Forsyth Hardy states in his *Documentary Biography*: "As a European he was fascinated by the way the Hearst press and its imitators could turn into a story what in European newspapers was called a report. A dramatic form was the basis of a means of communication" (33). This fascination with mass-communication made him change the subject of his research and he drifted into filmmaking and became interested in its potential as opinion-maker. Not only the American "yellow press" impressed Grierson; he was also the responsible for the editing of the English release of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. This fact enhanced his faith in the power of films as agent of social change.

When he returned to England he managed to get a place as Assistant Film Officer of the EMB, and later with the help of Stephen Tallents, he persuaded the EMB to create an independent Film Unit. With his Calvinistic upbringing and profound knowledge of Eisenstein's work, he dedicated his efforts towards the production of films that were socially progressive. As Richard Barsam argues in *Non-fiction Film: A Critical History*: "He believed in individual human beings and in the necessity of their collective efforts to improve society. He believed in the importance of work and in the dignity of the workers. He believed that the basic force behind art was social, not aesthetic" (79). Despite his belief in art as a social force, it should not be denied that Grierson had a profound aesthetic

[2] Quoted in Paul Rotha, *Documentary Diary: An Informal History of the British Documentary Film, 1928-1939* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1973).

influence on his followers due mainly to the impressive amount of articles in film theory he produced. He believed in the power of film to help the ordinary citizen to think about social issues and to influence social reform. These two trends can be seen prefigured in Flaherty's work (the former) and in the Soviet filmmakers' work (the latter).

Intertwined with these influences, Grierson had a missionary zeal and a pedagogical will to help society progress. As he says in *Grierson on Documentary*:

> To command, and cumulatively command, the mind of a generation is more important than by novelty or sensation to knock a Saturday night audience cold; and the 'hang-over' effect of a film is everything (165).

This "hang-over" effect is clearly connected with his fervour to educate and relates to a paternalistic attitude already present in Flaherty's work. In a period of social and economical decay but, at the same time, an era of extraordinary political and educational idealism, the 1930s, he believed in film as a powerful medium for educating the public and this clearly relates to Soviet filmmakers' usage of cinema as propaganda; he even stated in an issue of *Sight and Sound* magazine: "I have a great interest in films as such (…) I look on the cinema as a pulpit, and use it as a propagandist" (119). This preference for film as propaganda led him to downplay the influence of Flaherty's work. Despite being a good friend of Flaherty he never hesitated to criticise his work and, as Barsam claims, "He saw Flaherty as an innocent naturalist too concerned with observation to care about making a social statement" (79). Also, it can be said that Flaherty belongs to the humanist/romantic tradition when projecting one's values onto other cultures and his emphasis on the struggle of human versus nature. This emphasis owes more to Rousseauist ideas of the "noble savage" than to Grierson's neo-Hegelian beliefs in the "divine" power of the state to intervene in society. This tension became more apparent when Flaherty directed *Industrial Britain* (1933) for the GPO. Flaherty's chaotic way of dealing with money and his different and casual treatment economical problems caused a rupture between the two of them.

Grierson had an almost pathological hatred of fiction film. As he states in *Grierson On Documentary*, fiction film was the work of the devil, and no sooner were the Lumière workers leaving the factory than cinema "was taking a trip to the moon and, only a year or two later, a trip in full colour to the devil. The scarlet women were in, and the high falsehood of trickwork and artifice was in, and reality and the first fine careless rapture

were out" (132). In this passage he was clearly referring to Méliès and his fantasy films, and what is interesting is the way in which Grierson divides cinema into two different and opposing strands: the documentary as a socially progressive tool for purveying the messages of the state to its citizens and the fantasy (fiction) film as socially corrupting and escapist. More accurately, this distinction between fiction and non-fiction film tends to move away from technical or logistic distinctions into the field of politics. That is, for Grierson, the fiction (fantasy) film had no value in its glorification and celebration of life; his austere Calvinistic upbringing only allowed Grierson to see film as a tool. This minimization of "escapist" film did not mean that he did not appreciate the skill of Hollywood films; we was a keen film critic and committed observer of American life and, as referred to earlier, he was most interested in American marketing involving mass media such as film and newspapers.

This disregard for the fiction film must be seen in the context of a general fear, by intellectuals, of an American cultural invasion. Even by the 1930s there was a general impression that American films, through their dominance at the box-office, had the power to impose American cultural and social values on the public. As Andrew Higson says in *Waving the Flag*, "The documentary movement in the 1930s was thus at the forefront of attempts to establish an authentic, indigenous national cinema in response to the dominance of Hollywood's irresponsible cinema of spectacle and escapism" (187). This idea tended to establish British film in opposition to American film due to the former's, supposedly, more serious treatment of subject matter. Film, in Grierson's opinion, should serve as an educational and enlightening tool and, at the same time, be capable of showing its own workings so as to prevent the audience from getting mesmerized by a mechanical process. Thus, Grierson was not far away from Vertov's position, who claimed that: *"Kino Pravda* made heroic attempts to shield the proletariat from the corrupting influence of artistic film-drama" (34).

These attempts to shield the public from the corrupting powers of the fiction film can be illustrated by Grierson's efforts in establishing an alternative exhibition circuit for his films. These attempts were the main factor behind the accusations he faced from commercial distributors who charged him with unfair commercial practices. They argued he was menacing their business with the support he had from public and institutional funding. Also, commercial distributors did not find any pecuniary value in these films;

they disregarded documentaries as viable commercial products. It is difficult to assess the real impact these films had on the usual cinema going audience for there are no reliable figures on which to base any kind of analyses. The only thing that seems clear enough is the general distaste the industry traders' had for documentary films. As Paul Swann wrote in *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1946*, "They [the commercial distributors] all believed that their audiences came to be entertained, not educated and that uplift and escapism were rarely compatible" (120). To this, the documentary group replied with the argument that the distributors were frustrating the public's expectations by not permitting documentaries to reach the main theatres. It can be claimed that, ultimately, what made the GPO and EMB films relatively famous was the alternative exhibition scheme devised by Grierson and his cohorts, thus allowing them the wider attendance figures usually associated with fiction films. In this manner, Grierson had the privilege of a larger audience for his pulpit therefore making possible the spread of his social-democratic ideas. This establishing of a non-theatrical exhibition scheme (in film societies and in schools) led to a specialization of the content; Grierson and his collaborators had the opportunity to make films with a greater instructional subject matter, for this specific audience was prepared to accept them. One problem that this alternative exhibition scheme raised was the limited audience reached by the documentary group. According to Swann, "the documentary group estimated an annual non-theatrical audience of 10 million" (121). But, Grierson clearly believed that, as this audience was constituted by educated and enlighten people, the impact of the films was bigger than usual; that is, the people who went to see those films were considered to be opinion-makers and educators, thus they would spread the progressive message conveyed by the films. Their goal was first to influence the key policy-makers and then, the general public[3]. Another problem associated with this strategy is the charge of elitism, which was constantly being levelled against the documentary group. The films that had more success (*Night Mail, North Sea* [1938]) were the ones that shunned more avant-garde features such as non-linear editing and non-synchronous sound. So, the documentary group seemed to be neatly caught between limited commercial success and experimentation.

[3] In spite of having a conservative position, John Reith first director-general of the BBC was Grierson's kindred spirit, believing in mass-media's power to educate people. For a detailed account of the BBC's initial years see Peter Graham Scott, *British Television: An Insider's Story* (London: McFarland, 2000).

From reading Grierson's influences and ideas, the conclusion that he was a radical leftist could easily be drawn. But his ideas were far from being radical, and many critics find his approach much too compromised. As Brian Winston argues, his socialism was "an emotional support" and was not "too apparent on screen" (32). Grierson's group was seen as more liberal than socialist and its theoretical political foundations were rooted in nineteenth century French realistic aesthetics. Their political position can be seen as more liberal-socialist or social democrat than Marxist. According to Stuart Hood, the members of the realist school:

> Were young middle-class men and women who, in the aftermath of the General Strike – in which many of their contemporaries had been student scabs – were confronted with the evidence of social deprivation, of poverty and hardship among the working-class: conditions that were intensified by the onset of the world economic crisis (145).

In this way, the realist group is seen as a small bourgeois intellectual group that tried to denounce the appalling living conditions of many of their contemporaries, but did not or could not propose solutions to those appalling conditions.

One of the main questions associated with the documentary group is the question of sponsorship. The EMB served as an advertising board for Imperial products and its main goal was to stimulate their consumption. Furthermore, it was a government agency, and this fact seriously hampered any attempts at political radicalism or even independence. Later, when they moved to the GPO Film Unit, such companies as the Gas and Electricity Company were supporting their films. Probably this factor prevented the possibility of more radical approaches to social and economical themes; the problem was that, in their need to find funding for their work outside commercial cinema, they had to compromise and some documentaries were little more than crude advertisements for specific companies. An important consideration is that all this occurred during Conservative governments; it is interesting to notice that Conservative Governments funded such films as Edgar Anstey's *Housing Problems* (1935). Due to this political context, Grierson had many difficulties in sustaining the Film Unit; the complaints of commercial filmmakers that saw the Documentary Group as disloyal competition and the Conservative Cabinet's

fear that they were a radical leftist movement led to the end of the EMB's Film Unit and its later incorporation into the GPO Film Unit.

Together with Basil Wright, Harry Watt, Alberto Cavalcanti and Robert Flaherty, Grierson managed to establish a continuous operation in a permanently hostile political environment. If their venture seems bland to contemporary analysis this does not mean that it did not involve a certain degree of political risk. After all, they criticised their public supporters and valued the working-class as heroes. Also, we can trace in the 1930s, a time of idealism amongst poverty, the beginning of the ideas of the state as provider for and supporter of the less fortunate and educator of the masses. This also can relate to British ideas of civil service for the good of the nation and its people; Grierson and his collaborators clearly situated themselves in the position of the superiorly educated civil servant that had to instruct the poor uneducated masses.

As Swann puts it:

> The Griersonian school was guilty of an elitism that was richly evidenced in its output and that was all too apparent to those who watched its films. This position was very much in contrast to the explicit populism of most American fiction film. Intellectually, most of Grierson's followers were tied to the idea of an information elite who would collect, collate, and represent those aspects of political and social life they felt the public ought to know (178).

The only film directed by Grierson, *Drifters* (1929), was a study of the North Sea herring-fishermen that depicted the dignity of labour and celebrated the individual working man. *Drifters* was a major breakthrough for someone who had not had any practical experience in how to direct a film. He had a tight budget and was only helped in the editing stage. This film represents Grierson's ideal of work as liberating and valuable. Also, it wanted to show the public how the fishermen risked their lives to provide for the well-being of the nation. As Barsam writes:

> *Drifters* was important for several reasons. First, in Grierson's understanding of montage and its emphasis on the workingman, it reflected the influence of soviet filmmakers, particularly Eisenstein, on the foundation of the documentary film. Second, it presents a routine activity –

> herring fishing – which is nevertheless brought alive, not only in terms of the physical process, but, more important, in terms of the human drama involved in this essential part of the British economy (84).

These premises were to become the blueprint for numerous films that the group produced. As it can be seen, it fulfilled the EMB's need to advertise British products and it succeeded in depicting labour and work as valuable. In it we can read Flaherty's influences, the "noble savage" struggling against nature, and Eisenstein's montage techniques that valued the efforts of the working class. This documentary was well received by both the public and politicians, and this was an important factor contributing to the growth of documentary production within the group.

Drifters was the only documentary of the EMB era recognised by the public as of artistic value. The other documentaries produced before 1933 had poor artistic value, basically due to their functioning as advertising posters. The political pressures upon the group and the Cabinet's suspicion of leftist activity within the Film Unit of the EMB drove the group to the GPO in 1933 where it got the opportunity to produce films with a higher degree of technical and artistic value. As Stephen Tallents mentions: "The Conservative Research Council apparently accuse Grierson and his friends of Communism which is alleged to find expression in their work. For Communism read realism and a certain healthy liberalism and there might be something in it"[4] (88). Not only that, but also this shifting coincided with the availability of sound technology to the group. Albeit their technological facilities were not as developed as commercial cinema ones, they had the opportunity to produce better documentaries with the technical expertise of foreign directors, such as Flaherty and Cavalcanti. Grierson brought in these directors with the purpose of teaching filming techniques to the inexperienced team. As a matter of fact, most of the prominent figures of the documentary group could be seen as amateur enthusiasts of a new trend in filmmaking.

These combined efforts of experienced and inexperienced directors resulted in the production of documentaries that stand nowadays as one of the period's major efforts in British filmmaking. The approach to work within the group was probably one of the most important factors in its success. Actually, the group functioned as a kind of assembly line

[4] Quoted in Forsyth Hardy, *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979).

with the combined talents of diverse directors, technical staff, music composers and poets. Perhaps the most poignant example of this effort is *Night Mail* (1936) that was produced by Grierson, directed by Harry Watt and Basil Wright and had a musical score by Benjamin Britten and a poem by WH Auden. *Night Mail* had a typical humble subject: it depicted the journey of the postal express train between London and Glasgow. The film structure is quite straightforward; it follows the train through its journey and depicts the internal operation of its offices. The strengths of the film reside in the sense of urgency and drama that this particular journey had; the train has priority over other trains and everybody waits for its appearance, there is even one scene in which a framer sets his watch as it passes: "All Scotland waits for her".

Through the depiction of ordinary labour, Wright and Watt managed to elevate its stature to an unprecedented level. British public and private life seems to rest on the correct operations of the train. The emphasis added to normal and simple routine operations heightens the drama and the combination of the efficient soundtrack with Auden's verse propels the action with an unusual pace. The presentation of the workers seems to emphasize the importance and dignity of a job well done and they appear dedicated to efficiency and precision. This feeling of usefulness and working for the good of the nation is obviously related to Grierson's views on education and social progress; an ordinary task is promoted to one of vital importance to the nation's life. Coupled with this idealization of work is an attention to detail and even some hints of British charm and humour. This results in a technically advanced film that is instructive and pleasurable to watch. Nonetheless, there seems to pervade this film a sense of paternalistic middle-class condescension towards manual labourers; the age-old pattern of class difference still persists in the division of the tasks. This is most evident when the new worker is confused and is helped by his superior in a patronising way. Also, the world of the mail train is depicted as perfectly ordered, with no hints of class conflict or hierarchical resentment; everyone is in his right place.

Night Mail can also be read as a transitional film for the movement. The first films, like *Drifters*, were dedicated to the dramatization of the common labourer, but this seems to carry a narrow approach to working-class problems and had the same problems as Flaherty's films: the glorification, and mythification of the working-class hero. With its wider appeal and scope, *Night Mail* went a step further towards the social problem film

like *Housing Problems* that dealt with the poor housing conditions in London's low-rent areas. Having said that, we cannot deny to *Night Mail* some of the impressionistic mode that was present in previous films. It can be argued that the transitional value of *Night Mail* is incorporated in its technical aspects and in a slight shifting from the specific to the general.

The non-fiction film offered an effective field for non-linear editing and storyline. Modernism, along with Russian formalism, Dadaism, surrealism or Brecht's alienation effect functioned as a place for experimentation with time, space and fragmentation of reality. Grierson, as a European, was influenced by both modernism and Russian formalism. This led to experimentation within film of these alienating techniques, for the non-fiction film was not bound, in its early stages, to the conventions of the classic Hollywood narrative film. Documentary was not constrained to representations of reality as seen by a character; in documentary the voice of the filmmaker and the interpretation made by the audience allowed a freer representation and arrangement of narrative, as long as the result lent a meaning to the construction depicted by the film. This opportunity for the documentary to re-arrange reality was common to the avant-garde film. But, as discussed earlier, the need for a degree of commercial success led these films away from more radical exploitations of montage and sound. It can be argued that sound was one of the major factors that contributed to the coming together of non-fiction and fiction film. In the first films of the 1930s, in films such as *Night Mail* and *Song of Ceylon* (1934), Grierson and his collaborators managed to emphasise the use of sound as contrapuntal to the narrative in a non-synchronous manner. In these films sound is not explored as an aural sustainer of the visual narrative, but as a signifier in itself. In this case, sound relates to modernist tendencies of collage and fragmentation. Grierson's efforts to make documentary as an acceptable alternative to Hollywood led him to encourage experimentation with sound and, as Lovell and Hillier note, under Grierson the documentary movement became "a laboratory for experiments in the non-naturalistic use of sound" (28).

The need to make the films more acceptable to the general public led the documentary movement to use sound (and editing) in a more formulaic manner. Thus,

sound turns into speech in films like *Housing Problems*[5] and *The Smoke Menace (1937).* The films made by the documentary group move closer to the field of newsreels like *The March of Time.* Speech was then elevated to the category of rhetorical assertion. From the inhabitants of the poor slums depicted in *Housing Problems* to the over-bearing voice-over comment known as "Voice of God" was a short step. Sound, one of the innovative aspects of non-fiction film, became tamed and more argumentative than observational. Images lose their power and serve as mere decoration and illustration of an argument stressed by a spoken rhetoric. This argumentative mode still prevails, making way for charges of didacticism and paternalism. One of the casualties of the growing public acceptance of documentary was innovation; documentary film then moved away from the avant-garde towards the mainstream

Probably due to the variety of people that worked in the EMB and the GPO Film Unit, it is possible to distinguish between three different stylistic variations on the documentary mode: the lyrical (*Song of Ceylon*); the analytical (*Housing Problems*) and the impressionistic (*Night Mail*). Because of *Night Mail*'s success, Grierson sent Wright to Ceylon to direct a film for the Ceylon Tea Board. What was intended to be an advert becomes a poetic account of life in Ceylon; the resulting documentary *Song of Ceylon* is a four-part study on the traditions of Ceylon. In fact, Wright only spent one morning shooting scenes directly related to tea crops. Wright's subtlety is achieved by the account of Singhalese culture and life in a poetic manner, combining traditional music with landscape motifs. The pace of the film is quite slow and the reading of a seventeenth-century travelogue heightens the poetic feeling. It manages to escape the traditional clichés of the travel film genre and its poetic nature does not altogether prevent it from being a plausible portrayal of Singhalese life and culture.

Only in part three, "The Voices of Commerce", does the viewer actually see the commercial aspect of the film, the depiction of the tea harvesting and shipping. Its greatest strength is the way Wright managed to make a commercially sponsored film without falling into a simplistic appraisal of what it was supposed to endorse. Its poetic value both underpins and downplays the commercial nature of the project. In this way, it can be argued that Wright managed to escape the constraints of commercially sponsored filmmaking. The problem is that, as Brian Winston argues, these films had no great

[5] *Housing Problems* was the first film to use direct address to the camera, inaugurating the documentary-interview genre.

political interest; its main themes were anthropological ones. In *Song of Ceylon* the film "totally avoids the question of colonial labour and the economic exploitation of the colonies" (39). The cause of this was what Winston calls the "running away from social meaning" (37) that permeated the movement's films. For Winston, these documentaries did not succeed in showing the class divisions and struggles that existed in the working place. Instead, workers are always portrayed as cheerful and their bosses as kind and human. Moreover, this blandness is present in *Housing Problems*, perhaps the most radical of all the documentaries, where the problems seem to be a secondary concern. This romanticized view of social problems led to the fiction of the poor, suffering, working-class character that, with his cheerfulness and optimism, overcomes his problems with the aid of the companies that sponsored the film.

Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that the documentary movement led by Grierson had serious constraints in getting funds and was looked upon as a niche of left-wing activists within the EMB and GPO Film Unit structure. Moreover, the Grierson group was a product of an age of economical depression, but at the same time an age of hope in technology and progress. Their socially progressive attitude towards filmmaking had the value, as many critics argue, of portraying the working-class as valid and valuable. As Grierson said "Another thing in it [the documentary film] seemed a revolution in its time – it was about working people"[6] (145). This legacy of the dignity of work and the portrayal of working class people as valuable and important members of society still lives in British filmmaking and it can be argued that it was the most valuable contribution of the Documentary Film Movement and this has laid an aesthetical foundation for subsequent filmmakers to work upon.

[6] Quoted in Stuart Hood, "A Cool Look at the Legend". in Eva Orbanz. Ed. *Journey to a Legend and Back : The British Realistic Film* (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1977) 141-150.

2. Humphrey Jennings: moving away from didacticism towards poetical realism

As we saw earlier, the Documentary Movement was constituted by a heterogeneous group of people. Along with this, the political changes and pressures brought about by different governments led to some important transformations in both the composition and purpose of the Documentary Group.

In 1937 Grierson left the GPO Film Unit and set up the Film Centre in order to extend documentary into a wider field. In 1935, Grierson's biggest supporter Stephen Tallents had left the GPO Film Unit to become controller of public relations in the BBC Overseas Services and was an active member of the Imperial Relations Trust set up in 1937; it was this Trust which sent Grierson as film consultant to Canada, New Zealand and Australia. At the outbreak of war Grierson had gone to Canada and established there the National Film Board. Undoubtly, Tallents's departure from the GPO Film Unit left Grierson in a distressing position. Tallents's role was to convince senior civil servants of the GPO Film Unit's pertinence and importance in documentary filmmaking. So, when Tallents left the Film Unit, Grierson no longer had an expert public relations officer that knew how to deal with bureaucrats.

After Grierson left, the Film Unit continued under the leadership of Alberto Cavalcanti. Documentary filmmaking proceeded in the same manner as under Grierson's rule, but Cavalcanti lacked even a slight ability to deal with higher civil servants and, contrary to Grierson, was no political operator. But as he was a gifted director he could inspire and help junior filmmakers that respected him because of his contribution to advances in documentary techniques. Despite his capabilities, according to Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins he was "politically naïve" (117). Cavalcanti had also a different approach towards documentary production, as Richard Barsam states:

> The GPO under Alberto Cavalcanti placed a greater emphasis on producing straightforward government propaganda rather than the informational and enlightening documentary film of Grierson's vision, a wider and livelier focus on British society, and an increase in technical experimentation (100).

As referred to above, Cavalcanti was no politician and lacked Grierson's organizational competence, but he was technically more evolved and innovative and he even introduced several devices used by fiction film. He even said, "I hate the word 'documentary'. I think it smells of dust and boredom. I think 'realist films' much, much the best"[7] (52). Cavalcanti also tended to underplay the social aspect of documentary film in favour of the technical and the poetic aspects. According to Richard Barsam, "Cavalcanti was more interested in the visual and literary aspects of nonfiction film than its purposes, and thus emphasized scripts and shooting" (102). It can be argued that he was a much more professional filmmaker, paying more attention to the technical side of film production. As we will see later, this approach is going to be used by Humphrey Jennings in his wartime documentaries.

When the war broke out the GPO Film Unit was relocated to the Ministry of Information (MoI) and renamed the Crown Film Unit (CFU). Cavalcanti left to work with Michael Balcon for he was a Brazilian citizen and he refused to accept English citizenship, so Ian Dalrymple became the CFU's leader. But, before he left he commissioned a film from Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings about the beginning of the war and how people were coping, called *The First Days* (1939). This film can be said to be the blueprint of Jennings's wartime work.

In "Cinema, Propaganda and National Identity", James Chapman contests the view that "the government showed little or no interest in the role of film as a medium of propaganda and that British film-makers were left more or less to their own devices when it came to screen representation of the nation at war" (198-9). Chapman connects this idea to the instability caused by the outbreak of war, the successive nominations of Joseph Ball, Kenneth Clark and Jack Beddington as heads of the Films Division and rivalries between the *Documentary News Letter* Group and the MoI Film Division. According, to Chapman it was only Jack Beddington who succeed in uniting documentary film with mainstream film producers:

> The policy of incorporating both feature film producers and documentary film-makers into the propaganda effort was consolidated by Clark's successor, Jack Beddington, who actively encouraged the cross-fertilization between the two sectors. […] The wartime wedding, therefore, was to a

[7] Quoted in Elizabeth Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

> considerable degree the result of official policy. In particular, Beddington used his influence to persuade commercial producers to steer away from the melodramatic type of war film that typified the early years of the war and to concentrate instead on less sensational subject matter (199).

This particular political setting allowed documentary filmmakers to get into mainstream filmmaking and, thus, reach a wider audience. It can be claimed that this was a major factor behind the accepted idea of the 1940s as the golden age of film production. As Robert Murphy states in *Realism and Tinsel*,

> The forties are considered the golden age of the British film industry, though that reputation rests on a very small sample of films: *The Way Ahead*, *San-Demetrio London*, *In Which We Serve*, *Fires Were Started*, *Millions Like Us*, *Henry V*, *The Way to the Stars*, *Brief Encounter*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *Whisky Galore*, and *The Third Man* (1).

Following Chapman's reasoning, these films had their value because of the connection between documentary and the mainstream. These films can be considered a product of an age where social differences were put aside for the war effort and a new ethos of inter-class relationships appeared. Wartime became a fertile ground for a more Socialist kind of society, as George Orwell states in "The Lion and the Unicorn", "We cannot win the war without introducing Socialism, nor establish Socialism without winning the war" (118). This general feeling also pervaded the government; in 1942 the Beveridge Report was published, which established a blueprint for a future welfare system: a family allowance was established, a national health service would be provided and the unemployed would be eligible for benefits. Based on these ideas, a new political party, Common Wealth, was founded and achieved a by-election victory in April 1943. Despite Churchill's successful war leadership, this socio-political shift was the major cause behind Labour's victory in 1945.

Humphrey Jennings, in a letter to his wife, resumes this optimistic view of British society: "I really never thought to live to see the honest Christian and Communist principles daily acted on as a matter of course by a large number of British – I won't say

English – people living together"[8] (33). This celebration of "honest Christian and communist principles" was to play a central role in Jennings's films in which the comradeship and combined efforts are represented as the main force supporting British people.

Another consequence of war was women's mass entry into jobs traditionally associated with men. The mobility of women, the presence of foreign soldiers and the absence of husbands, fiancés and boyfriends permitted them new experiences. As Marcia Landy refers in "Melodrama and Femininity in World War Two British Cinema", "Films such as *Millions Like Us*, *The Gentle Sex* and *2000 Women* are part of a concerted effort to portray the contributions of women to the war effort, providing images of women's competence often in situations that parallel men's" (80). Despite censorship, these films succeed in presenting positive images of the "mobile woman" and her corresponding contribution to the war effort. In *Millions Like Us* (1943), a mixture of documentary footage and narrative fiction depicts a changing society and the opening up of new possibilities for both men and women. The intertwining of a private, domestic narrative with a public, industrial narrative illustrates women's movement from domesticity to a more active role in society. This "occupation" of men's traditional spaces presupposes a change in society constantly adapting to war constraints. Here melodrama is used against a backdrop of documentary "reality" emphasising the difference between the world of fantasy (melodrama) and the harsh reality of a war where relationships are ephemeral and uncertain.

The transformations occurring in the Documentary Movement were not an obstacle to film production; as stated above, during World War Two the political setting became much more favourable for documentary filmmakers, their skill was needed in the war effort. With Grierson's departure, Humphrey Jennings became the main figure in the Documentary Movement, and it can be argued that, of all directors of that time, Jennings became the most influential and respected. As Lindsay Anderson, in an interview by Eva Orbanz said: "Grierson was completely a theorist, a social theorist. […] The only director for me, of the British documentary movement, who had real poetic quality, perhaps even genius in his own way was Humphrey Jennings" (41). Jennings's films are noted for their poetic qualities and a groundbreaking use of sound and image.

[8] Quoted in Mary-Lou Jennings. Ed. *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet* (London: BFI, 1982).

Jennings was a typical intellectual of his time, a product of public school (Perse School) and Cambridge. His first interests were poetry, painting and theatre and in a classic example of intellectual dilettantism he decided to try the new medium of cinema with some friends. One of his friends was Stuart Legg who introduced him to Grierson. Jennings started doing some work for the GPO Film Unit, art direction and acting that were clearly related to his previous interests. But, in order to understand better Jennings's subsequent work within the GPO Film Unit and later the CFU, it is necessary to look at his work within the fields of poetry and painting.

Jennings was a keen and devout surrealist; his interest in surrealism is described by Anthony Hodgkinson and Rodney Sheratsky as "inevitable" for, "There was, after all, no serious aesthetic enterprise that did not arouse his interest" (23). According to these authors, Jennings took from surrealism "the importance of chance and coincidence" and "the irrational juxtaposition of images" (25). As we will see later, these, along with an innovative use of sound, are considered to be the major characteristics behind his work as a filmmaker. His involvement with the surrealist movement led him to be one of the organizers of the International Surrealist exhibition held in London in 1936. Jennings had some of his paintings in the exhibition and, according to Hodgkinson and Sheratsky, his main influences were Magritte and Francis Bacon. In his paintings he always started from a "known reality", a landscape or a monument and then, he transformed that reality into a dreamy and unfamiliar territory where the displacement induced the fantastic present in familiarity and ordinariness. His main themes were the depiction of recognisable landmarks, such as St. Paul's Cathedral Dome (which will appear later in several of his films) and the dehumanising aspects of industrialisation, hence his love for rural landscapes.

One film that displays his love of rural England and preoccupations with the dangers of technology is *The Birth of a Robot* (1936), a film commissioned by Shell Oil and directed by Len Lye. Amongst references to Botticelli, Venus and "Father Time", Jennings and Lye show a nature superseded by modern technology. This short film was the only colour film in which Jennings collaborated; the process used was called Gasparcolour which was invented by Major Adrian Klein (also the inventor of another colour process, Dufaycolour). His credits as art director reflect his interests in the development of

innovative films, but his experimentations with colour photography were restricted to this very short film.

His poetry is clearly indebted to surrealism; one of its key characteristics is the use of metaphorical juxtapositions to cut from one observation to another and image associations. The poem "I See London" written in the same year as his film, *Listen to Britain*, is a perfect example of these techniques:

> I see a thousand strange sights in the streets of London
> I see the clock on Bow Church burning in daytime
> I see a one-legged man crossing the fire on crutches
> I see three Negroes and a woman with white face-powder reading music at half past three in the morning
> I see an ambulance girl with her arms full of roses
> I see the burnt drums of the Philharmonic
> I see the green leaves of Lincolnshire carried through London on the wrecked body of an aircraft (7).

This poem can be read as a script draft to any of his wartime films, for some of its lines describe situations depicted in those films such as the "one-legged man crossing the fire on crutches" in *Fires Were Started* (1943). Together with painting, poetry became the grounds where Jennings drew much of his inspiration. As it can be seen by reading this poem, he tried to describe life in its utmost particularities. His gaze tries to illustrate as accurately as possible the chaotic reality of a bombed city.

Another of Jennings's projects was Mass-Observation, a movement he set up with Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson in 1937. The main purpose of this sociological movement was to analyse every aspect of British life to the smallest details. Mass-Observation managed to obtain more than a thousand volunteers and still exists nowadays as a market survey organisation. Its biggest project was called *Coronation Day*, an account of the 12th of May 1937, which was set as Coronation Day for the new king, George IV. The final product is a compilation of observations from more than 200 collaborators from England and other European countries. The purpose was to classify and analyse with scientific precision British society on a crucial day. But, as Hodgkinson and Sheratsky note that "*May the Twelfth*, although wearing a respectable scientific white coat, reveals

underneath very many of the more impish attributes of surrealism and poetic free association" (38). Nevertheless, Jennings's participation in the Mass-Observation project reveals his curiosity and compulsive depiction of British life. Also, his work within Mass-Observation relates to his activities as a filmmaker, that is, Mass-Observation tried to put on paper what the documentary film claimed to do: an acceptable and detailed account of ordinary life and people.

In the first significant film he directed and scripted, *Spare Time* (1939), he put the principles of Mass-Observation into practice with a cool, unromantic look at the leisure habits of working-class people in Bolton, Sheffield and South Wales. The final scene, the Manchester Victorian Carnival band playing "Rule Britannia" with kazoos, stills baffles viewers nowadays. According to Hodgkinson and Sheratsky, this intriguing scene seems to have been spun off from Mass-Observation's project *May the Twelfth* (38). *Spare Time* is a critical account of how working-class people spend their free time in fairgrounds and ballrooms. Here Jennings assumes the role of the cold, distant observer and his camera depicts the events from a comfortably remote point of view. Jennings's intellectual gaze does not permit the viewer to understand the habits portrayed; his "scientific" position only records the events and does not try to comprehend them. It can be argued that, in this film, Jennings is much closer to Grierson's pedagogical lectures and far from the poetic qualities Lindsay Anderson attributes to him. Interestingly *Spare Time*, previews the importance the soundtrack will acquire in later films. The ballroom scenes, the fairground music and the unusual kazoo orchestra show the importance popular music had in mass entertainment.

Jennings's attitude towards the working-class changed with the outbreak of war. As discussed earlier he was quite impressed by the effort of classlessness and, as Robert Murphy states in *Realism and Tinsel*, "Like many British film-makers, the war had a radicalising effect on Jennings. The common danger, the shared intensity of experience, seemed for a moment to fuse Britain into a harmoniously classless society" (27).

One of the first films where can be sensed a new perspective is *Heart of Britain* (1941), a description of Northern England's contribution to the war effort. In this film, shots of the countryside intersect with images of workers at Sheffield's steel works. The workers are presented as part of the effort and are placed at the centre of national life. The mixture of images and sounds propels the film, rather than a particular story line. As with so many documentary films, the spoken commentary is the least remarkable feature of this

film. As Lindsay Anderson argues in "Only Connect", "All the films are accompanied by commentaries, in some cases crudely propagandist, in others serviceable and decent enough; but almost consistently these off-screen words clog and impede the progress of the picture" (182). The commentary not only impedes the progress of the film, it also has a jingoistic tone, emphasising British tolerance (an orchestra in Manchester plays Beethoven's 9th Symphony) against German blood-thirstiness.

In *Listen to Britain* (1942) the influences surrealism had on Jennings's work can be sensed. In the collaboration with Stewart McAllister, the editor of several of his films, Jennings created a screen poetry, which celebrated a new-found classless society. In this film the sounds most characteristic of wartime England are present: tanks making their way surreally through an English village; Myra Hess playing in the dilapidated National Gallery; Flanagan and Allen playing in front of soldiers. As Gavin Lambert states in "Jennings' Britain": "*Listen to Britain* has an additional nostalgic quality; the sounds and images, in themselves and their different contexts, bring back a particular time and climate with almost overwhelming aptness" (25). The poetic association of both images and sound create an impressionistic mode throughout the film sublimating what Brian Winston, in *Claiming the Real*, identified as Jennings's hallmark: "Sound-picture complexities against a temporal logic" (106). For instance, the image of people listening to Haydn's *Midi* symphony is crosscut with images of bombers taking off, which constitutes the film's climax.

Fires Were Started[9] is considered to be Jennings's masterpiece. The film was commissioned by the Public Relations Committee of the Civil Defence and is an account of the autonomous fire brigades' work during the first phase of the blitz. The story has two parts; in the first part, the film describes an ordinary day at a fire brigade sub-section and its workers gleeful undertaking of administrative and entertaining tasks; the second part describes the brigade combating a fire, in a dockside warehouse, that threatens a ship and, during the fire-fighting, a fire fighter, Jacko, is killed in one of the most emblematic tropes in British films. In his book, *Fires Were Started*, Brian Winston argues that Jennings managed to create an image of a diverse community within a unified nation. For this, Jennings used the literary work of Raleigh and Shakespeare to unify people from different backgrounds and positions, "This harmony was absolutely central to Jennings, and it was

[9] Originally called *I Was a Fireman* it was shortened and retitled *Fires Were Started* for theatrical release.

grounded for him in the glories of a magnificent shared history and culture" (53). This sense of cultural heritage is expressed by folk songs and poems that unite the diverse workers, from the fire fighters to the switchboard operators. The continuity of the strength of the nation is dependant on the conjugated strength of diverse people and Jacko's heroism stresses working-class commitment to the war effort.

In "Representing the Nation: British Documentary Film 1930-1945", Robert Colls and Philip Dodd identify two different narratives that take place in *Fires Were Started*: one official "in line with myths both national and collective" and another unofficial engaged "in slower build-ups of character, friendships, local loyalties" (27). Both these narratives stress national continuity without eschewing myth and displaying working class culture as valuable and diverse. In this film there are no nationalistic lectures or cool observations of working class habits; the cheerfulness that pervades the sub-station is a call to national unity in the presence of the menace embodied by the fires. However, the film does not display the darker side of London during wartime; the racketeering, black market dealings and criminality are absent from these (and other) films, but it can be argued that the specific situation under which the film was made called for the banning of dissenting situations. As Colls and Dodd state:

> Humphrey Jennings has been considered a major figure in the development of the documentary tradition by combining a 'social conscience' with a 'People's war' to throw the tradition forward in a continuous span which first registers, and then fuses its preoccupation with class and nation (26).

These preoccupations with class and nation were often a reputable feature of wartime films in England and, as seen before, there was a combined movement away from melodrama escapism towards documentary "reality". But, as Brian Winston claims in his comparison between *Fires Were Started* and *The Bells Go Down* (1943), not all films dealt with similar themes in the same manner. Both films depict fire brigades in their daily routine but in *The Bells Go Down*, there is an intromission of the family space and a number of sub-plots concerning romantic matters. Also, the characters in *The Bells Go Down* seem posh and dislocated from their natural "environment". The fire scenes seem artificial in manner. And attesting to *Fires Were Started*'s validity, Winston mentions that

the images of the fire were "used endlessly as 'real' or 'authentic' pictures of the Blitz" (64).

This calls into question the documentary value of Jennings's work, for his films were carefully constructed around re-enactments of situations. Winston writes "The claim on the real in these circumstances was not that the camera filmed things as they were happening, but that it filmed things as they had happened" (20), and *Fires Were Started* emulates this claim by ensuring:

> the simplicity and witnessed truthfulness of the plot and much of the dialogue, the narrow focus of the characters, the patina of the details most vividly reinforced by the status of the actors as 'real' fire personnel and the reality of non-studio locations (64).

The argument against "indirect" filming in documentary falls short of its claim, when assuming pure objectivity exists in direct, fly-on-the-wall filming. Concluding, it can be argued that, as Winston writes, "The assumption that the observational mode is the only way of reaching a cinematic truth is, finally, as naïve as the old belief that the camera by its very nature cannot lie" (69). In this way, Jennings's work can be perceived as valid and successful in capturing British life during wartime in a "realistic" manner, despite its re-enactment of situations. Jennings is then moving towards what might be called a semi-documentary form, involving narrative and fictional reconstruction.

Jennings's last wartime film *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) is a description of the last days of the war: the Arnhem strike, a raid over Germany and the birth of Timothy, who becomes the repository of a nation's expectations and hopes for a better future. Different personal stories are woven together with national tragedies; as Lindsay Anderson asserts in "Only Connect", "It is a picture of the last year of the war, as it was lived through by people in Britain" (184). The film's commentary, written and read by E.M. Forster, is of unusual grace and quality, underlining the images and stressing the message without lecturing. A particular sentence describes accurately the general tone and summarises what the message of the film is: "This is what it was like. This is what we were like – the best of us". In this film, Jennings returns to a more surrealist mode, there is a constant overlapping of sound and images most notably in the sequences where Myra Hess plays Beethoven at the same time that the images show the final attacks on Germany. As Gavin Lambert says,

the recurrent changes, crosscuts and overlapping show “Jennings’ impressionism stretched to its utmost” and make “the perspective slightly blurred” (26). But, it can be said that this almost dreamy effect obtained by the film is the pinnacle of a particular cinematographic style.

Demonstrating the war’s influence on Jennings work are his subsequent films until his tragically premature death in 1950 while shooting a film in Greece; they are generally considered less interesting and passionate than the earlier films made during the exceptional conditions referred to earlier. Nevertheless, his wartime films constitute a respectable and innovative body of work that inspired Free Cinema directors, such as Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson who claimed that: “For reality, his wartime films stand alone; and they are sufficient achievement” (183).

II. Working-Class Realism: Angry Young Men, Free Cinema and the British New Wave

The documentaries of the 1930s and 1940s focused on social problems and addressed the individual as a citizen of a nation dependent on national institutions that promote well-being. This concern was deeply connected to a rejection of a purely escapist cinema and fears of an invading American mass-culture.

After the peak of the 1940s, "realist" films in England were shunned in favour of Gainsborough melodramas and Ealing comedies. The films of the 1950s that dealt with war had nothing to do with the 1940s films that depicted a nation united in the war effort. These films had aristocratic and gentlemanly settings, miles away from the working-class environment of previous films.

The 1950s are perceived as the beginning of the age of affluence and mass-consumption. The post-war years between 1945 and 1955 were a time of tough economic restrictions, rationing and deprivations but, with the help of the American Marshall Plan, the nations involved in World War Two, such as Britain, began to experience an economic boom. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan proclaimed in 1957 that "most of our people never had it so good. Go round the country, go to the industrial towns, and you will see a state of prosperity such as we have never had in my lifetime"[10] (202), summarising the spirit of the age. Bound with this economic boom, there was a consumerism boom; the number of cars and electric appliances per household dramatically increased to figures usually associated with the United States. Perhaps the most important household acquisition of the 1950s was the television set, which became the symbol of a new age of optimism and spending. Also, there was the perception that social and sexual attitudes were changing, especially in relation to the role of women in society.

The mobility of working-class people, especially from provincial towns to London and the crisis within the coal and heavy industries led to a modification in the habits and way of behaving of the working-class. After winning the first post-war elections in 1945 with a majority, Labour lost in 1951 to the Conservative party, but which nonetheless continued its predecessors' policies of full employment and expanding the welfare state.

In spite of this economic boom, a large part of the population continued to live in appalling conditions in run-down housing estates. In fact, economic inequalities had not disappeared and the old class system persisted. According to estimates made by *The Economist* for 1956-60, 88 per cent of tax payers owned only 3.7 per cent of private wealth

[10] Quoted in T.F. Lindsay and John Montgomery, *The Conservative Party* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

while the richest 7 per cent owned 84 per cent[11]. Together with the persistence of inequalities, Britain was no longer the world power it used to be. The re-emergence of the German, Italian and French economies became a serious threat to an undercapitalised and antiquated British industry. British traders had difficulty in selling their products overseas because of a high exchange rate and increasing competition from the United States and Japan. Another aspect was the military budget; due to problems in the British colonies, military expenditure rose exponentially to levels comparable only with the United States' and Soviet Union's military budgets. The 1956 Suez debacle in which Britain, in collusion with the French and the Israelis, waged war against the Egyptians, served to demonstrate that Britain was no longer the world-power it had been. This episode was emblematic in the way it clearly demonstrated the return of a divided society, in which the war time consensus could never again be achieved[12].

The late fifties were also associated with the increasing importance ascribed to youth problems. Youth became a marketable niche for companies that tried to sell their products (most notably, clothes and motorbikes) to an ever increasing group. The independence of working-class youths led to a rise in their expenditure and social visibility. The appearance of youth cults, such as the Teddy Boys, associated with riots and petty criminality led to society's worries about teenager sexual immorality and violence. These worries were clearly amplified by an over-eager press always ready to exaggerate tales of teenage wildness. In his book, *Teenage Revolution*, Peter Laurie suggested that "the popular image of the giddy sex-crazed teenager is rather out of touch with the facts" (114), emphasizing the typical mechanism of blaming a social group for a perceived decline in social values. These anxieties about teenager behaviour were connected with worries about the effect that mass-consumerism had on the traditional working-class. Emblematic of this preoccupation was Richard Hoggart's book *The Uses of Literacy*, written in 1957, in which he expressed his concern about the eroding of a traditional working-class culture. His argument was that:

> We are moving towards the creation of a mass culture; that the remnants of what was at least in parts an urban culture 'of the people' are being

[11] See R. Blackburn, "The Unequal Society" in R. Blackburn and A. Cockburn Eds. *The Incompatibles – Trade Union Militancy and The Consensus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 17-20.
[12] For an analysis of the changes occurred in post-war Britain see Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*. 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996) 18-181.

> destroyed; and that the new mass culture is in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing (284-5).

This mass culture was related to the American way of life and many intellectuals and politicians were extremely anxious about the adoption of typical American patterns of behaviour and the eroding of traditional working-class solidarity in favour of individualism. The "shiny barbarism" denounced by Hoggart became the hallmark of a post-war generation supposedly more preoccupied with material values than spiritual ones and less communitarian than traditional working-class culture.

Youth became the symbol of this cultural decay, but, to some authors like Stuart Hall, these attitudes of cultural philistinism and violence were a revolt against old patterns of class submission and were explained by the "conditions of life and work in which working-class men, women and young are obliged to live" (29-30). It seems that working-class youth visibility led to an overall concern for the abasement of middle-class values of respectability and restraint. This concern is also present in the widespread anxieties about female sexuality at a time where oral contraceptives became available and more and more women were beginning to acquire financial independence and social prominence. The Second World War led to a marked growth in women's employment figures and the end of the war did not bring women "back home". The increase in spending power led to women being considered the main target of marketing and publicity; the new wonderful electric appliances were directed to the "housewife" who managed the family budget. The image of the working mother led to unfounded fears that juvenile delinquency had a close connection with the advent of "neglecting working mothers" who put material values above the well-being of their family.

The British Nationality Act of 1948, which extended citizenship to all members of the Commonwealth, led to a constant rise in immigration. Despite more conservative views, Britain needed the migrant workforce to cope with the shortage of, mostly, manual and unskilled labour. The often poor housing conditions of the immigrant workers and the non-existence of efficient laws of integration and against racial discrimination led to an explosive situation. In 1958 in Nottingham and Notting Hill, after white youth's attacks on black people and their property, there were extensive and severe riots. Oddly enough, the

victims (the immigrants) were the ones blamed by the authorities, which led to the adoption of stricter migration laws.

Together these social and cultural problems challenged established views of the political and social consensus in the fifties. Britain's antics in Suez and the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary in 1956 served to shatter ideas of stability and political peace. The performance of John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and the publication of Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* (1956) marked the emergence of a literary group dissatisfied with society's complacency, The Angry Young Men. This group had its origins in "The Movement", a group of young poets and novelists like Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and John Wain. The Suez affair did give visibility to this group of young and restless writers that declared that there were no great causes left and portrayed working-class youths as materialistic mavericks dedicated to social climbing.

The Angry Young Men tag can be derived from the fact that some books like Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) described the lives of young, virile males that, amid social criticism directed at the upper-classes and women, tried to succeed in an environment hostile to working-class youth. The main character in *Look Back in Anger*, Jim Porter, can be seen as the perfect symbol of this type of ranting and disgruntled youth that shoots in every direction when trying to say what is wrong with British society. In *Second Time as Farce*, David Edgar defined Jimmy Porter as "an existential hero, angry but helpless, at odds with the present but faithless in the future" (140), thus summarising the prevailing mood in British intellectual circles in the mid 1950s. What seems clearer nowadays is the erratic and inaccurate use of this tag; in fact, most of these writers denied their affiliation with this group and even expressed personal grievances against each others.[13]

In his book, *The Angry Decade*, Kenneth Allsop, calls this spirit of revolt "dissentience" and distinguished between the "spiritual bomb-throwers led by that guerrilla philosopher Colin Wilson who campaigns against the present high priests of Western Civilization" and those "who share with Kingsley Amis a cynical, mocking, derisive disgust with authority and the 'shiny barbarism' " (9). He also relates the success and the attention they had to their youth, that is, in an age where youth became "sanctified", the emergence of such a young group of writers was something in itself. Nevertheless these

[13] See Dale Salwak, *Interviews with Britain's Angry Young Men* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 1984).

writers symbolized an increasingly spreading anxiety about the inefficiency of political and social changes. The "ominous atmosphere of the end of the end of the party" (207), as Allsop wrote, left a feeling of disenchantment with the perspectives wrought by post-war Labour and its promises of a classless society. As William Donaldson stated:

> They are angry because England is still riddled with class-consciousness, because the Establishment still rules, because the English upper and middle class tend to be ignorant, insensitive philistines, because English films are ghastly, because the English theatre means *The Reluctant Debutante* and *Dry Rot* […][14] (137).

This radical position seemed to stem from a committed and militant group but, as mentioned before, it was a heterogeneous and somewhat divided gang of young turks. It can be maintained that the general attitude was one of dissent and cynical distrust of institutions which explains the adoption of right-wing views by many of these writers in later years[15]. These writers seemed to reject the role of the engaged intellectual (like WH Auden in the 1930s), in their contempt for the working-class and the supposed superficiality of their lives. They also expressed a disdain for the masses and envied the position of the "outsider" who could teach and discipline them. Jimmy Porter, Joe Lampton and Jim Dixon cannot be mistaken with Osborne, Braine and Amis, but, in their works, there are disturbing signs of incipient conformity and misogyny.

In *Sex, Class and Realism*, John Hill linked the revolt of the Angry Young Men with misogynistic attacks on women in films (24). Hill is too keen in associating the working-class heroines of the British New Wave with the new affluence and claims that these films link femininity with snobbery, superficiality and materialism. For instance, in *Look Back in Anger*, Jimmy Porter constantly humiliates his wife because of her upper-class origins; in this manner, the attacks on women become attacks on the upper-classes and vice-versa. In *Room at the Top* (1959), women are perceived as mere trophies of a battle between working-class and upper-class males; Joe Lampton's seduction of Susan is depicted as revenge against her well-bred suitor and her father and, by extension, all the upper-classes. It can be argued that these novels criticize the mindless working-class social

[14] Quoted in Kenneth Allsop *The Angry Decade* (London: Peter and Owen, 1958).
[15] The most striking example is Kingsley Amis who became an advisor of Margaret Thatcher's government in the 1980s.

climbers that leave behind their values in favour of wealth and social status but, there is a feeling that they are not to blame for society's inequalities and that they are forced to survive in a harsh materialistic world.

Unemployment amongst young males thwarted the image of the male as the sole provider and source of money. Hill writes that, "if the object of attack is effeminacy so the virtues of style and character are those of masculinity. To this extent, the Angry Young Men phenomenon was working over a more generalised cultural anxiety around the question of male identity" (25). Seen from this perspective, the Angry Young Men experience appears as a revolt against femininity and an upholding of virile virtues. But, the New Wave films also expressed young males' inadequacy to live up to the new times at the same time they celebrated a new breed of working-class heroines. Hill fails to perceive the ambiguous characterisation of the young male protagonists of these novels and films who appear as charismatic rebels but also as slightly pathological figures.

The end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s also brought to public knowledge a cluster of writers not associated with the group discussed before. What they had in common was a taste for working-class settings and characters; the novels and plays written by Keith Waterhouse, Allan Sillitoe, David Storey and Shelagh Delaney dealt essentially with the dilemmas of working-class youth in Britain's Northern industrial towns. The appearance of these Northern tales of work in factories and life in housing-estates challenged a Southern cultural predominance and established the symbolic setting and iconography of most of the films that would be part of the New Wave or "Kitchen-Sink" cycle of films. A recurring theme of these novels such as Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1959) and Storey's *Flight into Camden* (1960) was the urge to escape the drudgery and weariness of provincial life by departing for the almost "enchanted" world of London. They also differed from the Angry Young Men group in their more poetic view of society and a lesser stress on revolt and anger. Their world was one of entrapment and disenchantment with the limited possibilities of a life devoted to dreadful and dehumanising work. Interestingly, these writers followed throughout their careers the same themes and views, as opposed to Amis *et al*, who drew closer to the Establishment.

The combination of all these factors led to an intellectual disenchantment with Britain. Intellectual dissent seemed to challenge the views of a consensual and rich society. The social and sexual change of the time led to a disintegration of the dream of a classless

British society, leading to social unrest which made some crave for a kind of Edwardian golden age. Working-class youth visibility led to disgust at their supposed philistine view of the world. In spite of all these changes, British film gave the impression of being totally disconnected from this new actuality. Lindsay Anderson, a film critic and founder of the film journal *Sequence*, argued in his 1957 essay "Get Out and Push", that:

> To counterbalance the rather tepid humanism of our cinema, it must also be said that it is snobbish, anti-intelligent, emotionally inhibited, wilfully blind to the conditions and problems of the present, dedicated to an out-of-date, exhausted national idea (157).

This essay was part of *Declaration*, the literary manifesto of the Angry Young Men. In 1953 Lindsay Anderson directed a short documentary about the Margate fun fair called *O Dreamland*. Together with Tony Richardson who had produced a successful staging at the Royal Court Theatre of Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* and Karel Reisz, directors of *Momma Don't Allow* (1955), which was about a jazz club and Lorenza Mazzetti, director of *Together* (1956), Lindsay Anderson established Free Cinema, a group of six programmes held at the National Film Theatre between February 1956 and March 1959. Apparently, the main reason behind the creation of this movement was the need to present the public with the work of unknown young documentary filmmakers. As Gavin Lambert affirms in *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson*, "by claiming that the three films formed a 'movement', he not only created one, but became its leader" (71). Coupled with this marketing manoeuvre, Anderson managed to organize a deliberate challenge to traditional British cinema culture and themes. The films made for the Free Cinema events were mainly documentaries calling for a break with the rather tepid films of the time. The first Free Cinema manifesto, written by Anderson and signed by Reisz, Richardson and Mazzetti, claimed that:

> As film-makers we believe that
> No film can be too personal.
> The image speaks. Sound amplifies and comments. Size
> is irrelevant.
> Perfection is not aim.
> An attitude means a style.

A style means an attitude[16] (71-2).

This manifesto drew the movement towards an emphasis on the personal view of the filmmaker. No wonder then, that these documentaries were almost solitary efforts that claimed a poetic quality. The personal vision was to be connected with a sense of social progression and by implication with the denunciation of inequalities. As Herik Hedling asserts in "Lindsay Anderson and the Development of British Art Cinema", "These ideas were articulated in […] the critical manifesto *Stand Up! Stand Up!* in 1956, where Anderson, now associated with the New Left, called for a more socially conscious and responsible British cinema as well as for personal vision" (179).

As referred to early, Anderson admired extensively Humphrey Jennings's work which he considered to have a poetic quality as opposed to John Grierson's work that had a proselytising nature. Seen from this perspective, the Free Cinema documentarists can be perceived as the continuation of the "poetic realism" enunciated by Jennings. *O Dreamland* and *Momma Don't Allow*, in their portrayals of working-class amusements and cultural philistinism, are a clear continuation of Jennings's *Spare Time* and its analysis of the masses. Both documentaries show the noisy environment of working-class life as a metaphor of mass consumption society's emptiness. Richardson, Reisz and Anderson used songs in the same manner that Jennings did previously: in *Spare Time* it was the bizarre version of "Rule Britannia" that underlined the amusements of the working-classes, in *O Dreamland*, the pop songs "I Believe" and "Kiss Me, Thrill Me" play along with the images of the ghastly freak shows abundant at Margate and, in *Momma Don't Allow*, the Teddy Boys dance entranced by the jazz tunes, forgetting their everyday life. As stated before, this use of popular culture was common in Jennings's work, but the Free Cinema filmmakers do not resort to contrasts between popular and high-brow culture as Jennings did. Instead, they emphasise the almost catatonic entrancement of the crowd. As they were middle-class and had a university education they were both fascinated and repulsed by the working-class. That is, they tried to capture the essence of a culture that was, essentially, alien for them. Their ambivalence seemed to stem from the cultivation of a sensibility which regarded "provincial" as a positive term. It can be maintained that this movement towards the "other" in British culture is a mark of this time, a reaction against a rather tepid

[16] Quoted in Gavin Lambert, *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson – A Memoir* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000).

conformism and tried and tested formulas. Undoubtedly they admired the working-class vitality and cheerfulness which seemed to be non-existent in the filmmakers' own environment. In this manner they are reminiscent of Jennings and Grierson and their obsession with the everyday life of working people. Their preoccupation with ordinary people and ordinary life led them to, sometimes, take a superior stance towards the uneducated masses. And if Grierson's work was to educate the masses, Anderson, Reisz and Richardson's work was to show how they spent their free time.

The next Anderson documentary was *Everyday Except Christmas* (1957), an account of the daily life at the Covent Garden market and it followed a similar pattern. The film begins with a typical Jennings's device, the upper-class voice-over wishing the viewers a goodnight, which Jennings identified in "Only Connect": the effective use of contrasting image and sound (182). Anderson, interviewed by Eva Orbanz, and drawing on Grierson's writings, defined documentary as "a creative interpretation of actuality" (46), that is, actuality (characters and events which are not invented) is interpreted in an artistic manner. This interpretation allowed the use of non-diegetic music and other creative devices, thus connecting these documentaries with their predecessors at the Documentary Movement. According to this interpretation of Anderson's, these films cannot be inserted in the Direct Cinema idea, "Because of course in art everything in the end is selective. Therefore subjective" (46).

Everyday Except Christmas is a warm view of the working-class characters that concentrated on their life in the market. Anderson depicts in an affable fashion the everyday chores of the market workers. The non-diagetic use of music is reminiscent of Jennings, but the male camaraderie scenes takes us back to Grierson's *Night Mail*, especially the tea break. The dignity of the workers and the buyers seems to connect Anderson's work with the Griersonian documentary, which is further highlighted by the closing didactic remark: "Many things change, but work doesn't change, and we all depend on each other's work as well as our own". It can be argued that this observation on the dignity of work and the importance of working for the common good, as Grierson's fishers and postal operators and Jennings fire fighters had, constitutes one of the main recurring themes in British "realist" filmmaking. The other themes are the exposition of mass consumerism and entertainment (in films like *Spare Time* and *O Dreamland*) and the

depiction of marginalised (by the government and media) working-class culture and life using non-professional and or unknown actors, such as in *Fires Were Started*.

The Free Cinema programmes number 4 and 5 gave an opportunity to young Polish and French directors, such as Roman Polanski, Walerian Borowczyk, Claude Chabrol and François Truffaut[17], but in programme number 6, the last one, the main attraction was another Karel Reisz feature, *We Are the Lambeth Boys* (1959). Interviewed by Eva Orbanz, Reisz claimed that the film was about "how impossible modern society is for young people" (55) and, in fact, this depiction of a working-class youth club in the Lambeth district of London, gives an affectionate view of the often maligned Teddy Boys. This documentary succeeds in its portrayal of how the Cockney boys spent their time in the late 1950s and what emerges from the picture is not violent thuggery, but a group of teenagers worried about their futures and discussing themes such as the abolition of the death penalty.

As seen before, in the 1950s, youth became the subject of all kinds of discourses and, almost all of them painted a picture of violence and sexual licentiousness. Reisz succeed in presenting a humanized representation of the dreaded Teddy Boys and did not adopt the same condescending stance that he and Richardson had adopted in *Momma Don't Allow*. Seen in this manner, *We Are the Lambeth Boys* belongs to the "realist" tradition in its depiction of the marginalised classes. Reisz summarises this idea in the interview already referred to:

> The basic premise of documentary in my view, which is a premise which Jennings and certainly Flaherty worked, is that you *must make the drama out of the ordinary*. […] I feel the ordinary, the everyday, is the proper subject of documentary. But that does not mean you should not interpret it. The moment you reject the factor of *interpretation* you are actually rejecting your responsibility (62, emphasis added).

Despite emphasising Jennings's influence and criticizing Grierson's bureaucratic and zealot perspective, the three premises enunciated above (the importance of work, the

[17] Roman Polansky's *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (Poland, 1957) and Walerian Borowczyk's *Once Upon a Time* (Poland, 1957) were part of "Free Cinema 4 – Polish Voices" (screened 3-6 September 1958). François Truffaut's *Les Mistons* (France, 1957) and Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (France, 1958) were part of "Free Cinema 5 – French Renewal" (screened 7-9 September 1958).

insidious effects of mass culture and the depiction of other classes and settings) link the Free Cinema filmmakers with the Griersonian tradition. They intended to make "poetic realist films", as Jennings had done, about the working-classes. It can be claimed that they succeed in obtaining a "poetic quality" by the judicious use of music and image in a deliberately composed style. This perspective is opposed to Direct Cinema claims of authenticity and objectiveness for, as seen before (and argued extensively by Brian Winston[18]) these claims cannot be upheld simply because the act of making a film involves subjectiveness and a point of view. As a result, the Free Cinema perspective appears honest in its acknowledgement of the interpretation of actuality.

Free Cinema documentaries became the blue-print for the upcoming full-length features. Tony Richardson and John Osborne earned enough money with their English Stage Company to set up a film production company, Woodfall Films, together with the experienced American film producer Harry Saltzman and to produce a film version of the successful John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1959) starring Richard Burton. Woodfall became then the production company responsible for almost all of the "Kitchen-Sink" films. The title New Wave is directly linked to the French *Nouvelle Vague*, but by basing their films around literary adaptations they differed essentially from their continental counterparts who espoused a pure Auteurist theory. What they shared with the French *Nouvelle Vague* and Italian Neo-Realism was the urgency to challenge the industry establishment by making films with low budgets and concerned with faith in the less privileged. These films continued the legacy of the Free Cinema movement and its two basic premises: freedom from commercial constraint and personal freedom of expression. These two characteristics can be merged in what is commonly called "poetic realism", but the word "realism" is in itself problematic. How these films and documentaries discussed here can claim "realism" needs some clarification.

As John Hill argues in *Sex, Class and Realism*, "No work can ever reveal reality. Realism, no less than any other type of art, depends on conventions" (57) and these conventions are prone to change and contestation. Seen in this manner, the New Wave films of the late 1950s and early 1960s connect to a specific convention of "realism". Raymond Williams suggests in "A Lecture on Realism" that, "The crucial development of

[18] See Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Griersonian Documentary and its Legitimations* (London: BFI, 1995).

realism as a whole form occurs in the drama in the eighteenth century" (63) and identifies three defining characteristic of realistic drama: firstly, there is "A conscious movement towards social extension" (63), that can be defined as the adoption of characters and situations other than the middle-class bourgeois spectators; secondly there is the intention of "making action contemporary" (63), thus shunning historical drama in favour of contemporary social problems drama and, thirdly, there is "an emphasis on secular action" (64), that is, the metaphysical and divine interventions in human action are abandoned. Williams also refers to a growing predominance of "the private domestic room" (66) and the question of the dramatic method "which is at once authentic and rehearsed" (72) mostly when dealing with working-class and regional particularities.

Colin MacCabe in "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses", defines a classic realist text as "one in which there is a hierarchy amongst the discourses which compose the text and this hierarchy is defined in terms of an empirical notion of truth" (8). This empirical notion of truth is linked to the viewers' acceptation of what they see as real, as actually happening before their eyes. He proceeds to relate the classic realist text to the prevailing mode in filmmaking and identifies some types of documentary as "linked to a social-democratic conception of progress" by the "contradiction between the dominant discourse of the text and the dominant ideological discourses of the time" (16). This contradiction is present in the New Wave films due to their focusing on characters and themes usually ignored by the mainstream.

By using these definitions of "realism" the New Wave films (as well the Free Cinema documentaries and Humphrey Jennings's films) can be considered to belong to this particular mode of filmmaking. William's three defining characteristics apply effectively to these films that dealt with contemporary themes and extended their settings to the working-class environment of Northern English towns. Also, the private domestic room is a constant feature and that is the reason why these films were called "Kitchen-Sink" dramas. Another feature that came all the way from the Documentary Movement and Humphrey Jennings was the use of non-professional or amateur actors that led to the hybrid situation of authenticity and staging referred to by Williams.

As seen before, Free Cinema directors aspired to "poetic realism" and for Anderson, influenced by Jennings, this poetry lay in the fusion between style and theme, form and content as in *Everyday Except Christmas* but, for John Hill in *Sex, Class and*

Realism, this mixture of poetic and realism suggested "a disjunction or tension between form and content, or more specifically, between narration and description" (129). This question is raised by the extensive use of location, and the problematic employment of space and place. Geoff Brown says in "Paradise Found and Lost: The Course of British Realism":

> Think British Realism, and you think inevitably of kitchen sinks, factory chimneys, cobblestones, railway arches, bleak stretches of moor or beach, graffiti-lined council estates, people and landscapes placed in spare and striking juxtaposition. You also tend to think black and white: the perfect colour scheme for grey skies, smokestacks, and poetic melancholy (189).

British realist films have a strong and identifiable iconography, meaning that it is the location and the landscape that prevail in the spectator's mind. This iconography began in the 1930s documentaries and it is still present nowadays allowing the spectator to identify and relate to a particular strand of filmmaking. Hill emphasises this idea by claiming that "what becomes a characteristic of the British 'new wave' is its deployment of actions and, especially, locations which are ostensibly non-functional" (129). These locations and establishing shots are abundant in these films. For instance, in John Schlesinger's *A Kind of Loving* (1962) there is an overview of a canal and factory chimneys before the introduction of Vic; in Tony Richardson's *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) there is an aerial shot of Nottingham before the actual narrative action; in Richardson's *A Taste of Honey* (1961) there are several shots of a street parade prior to Jo's appearance; in Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), there are two high-angle shots of the city and a back alley before we see Arthur in his bed. More examples of this precedence of location over narrative and action could be cited.

Arguably the most thorough study of the landscape in these films is Andrew Higson's "Space, Place, Spectacle: Landscape and Townscape in the 'Kitchen Sink' Film", in which the author develops the ideas discussed above. Higson argues that the New Wave directors, in the same manner used by the Documentary Movement directors, tried to establish truth by identifying the shots as real in a determined historical time and place (this reasoning is strikingly similar to Raymond William's definition of classic realism).

The outcome of this importance of the establishing shot in these films leads to the tension also referred to by Hill. Higson claims that:

> There is, however, a way in which this tension is transcended by the incorporation of landscape and townscape shots into and as (sic) the movements of the narration itself: place becomes a signifier of character, a metaphor for the state of mind of the protagonist, in the well-worn naturalist tradition. A further […] effect of at least some of these shots […] is to function as spectacle, as a visually pleasurable lure to the spectator's eye. This is particularly the case with That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill, which, […] rapidly becomes an iconographic cliché of this cycle of films (3).

Higson, identifies this type of filmmaking with the kind of the working-class aestheticisation made by the Griersonian documentary filmmakers, where "The otherness of the place and the people is potentially threatening, dangerously strange" (10). He links this portrayal of the working-class with the Mass Observation tradition of anthropology of the people, especially people from the Midlands and the "exotic and distant" north. In this fashion, the New Wave directors adopt the same position that the Documentary Movement filmmakers and Humphrey Jennings had on the uneducated masses. As Hill states, these descriptions lead the films to a "detachment of place from action" (130), thus alienating the characters from the settings in a manner similar to Anderson's *O Dreamland* and Jennings's *Spare Time.* This is most striking in Richardson's *The Entertainer* (1960) which takes place in the seaside resort of Morecambe and in the trip to Blackpool in *A Taste of Honey*. The visual composition of the films stresses the tensions within the characters and their estrangement from the claustrophobic space they inhabit.

These sequences of the specific city locales where the actions take place (the Pub, the Street, the Fairground and the Canal) serve to establish moral authenticity and were used as conventional signs of reality. These sequences also have a kind of poetic and aesthetic value in their portrayal of the slums. Jo (played by Rita Tushingham) is seen walking along the Salford canals in *A Taste of Honey* on a journey to an almost enchanted cityscape filled with mist. The lingering dissolves, the use of associative editing (as Jennings did), the employment of non-diegetic sound (the children's rhyme song "The Big

Ship Sails" is used to bind up the diverse images) combine to deploy a sense of "poetic reality" as advocated in the Free Cinema manifestos. One of the most important factors in this manner of displaying Manchester "reality" was the extensive use of location shooting and the shunning of studio sets. Walter Lassally was the cinematographer behind most of the Free Cinema documentaries and Tony Richardson wanted him to shoot *Look Back in Anger*, but Harry Saltzman's pressures led Richardson to work with the more experienced and more conventional Oswald Morris. It was not until *A Taste of Honey*, based on a play by Shelagh Delaney, that Richardson fulfilled his wish of working with Lassally, making way for a more experimental mode of working. The studio sets present in *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* are totally absent from *A Taste of Honey*, giving a more honest and "real" perception of the squalid conditions Jo and her mother lived in.

The advent of the more portable Arriflex camera made possible a more fluid work and it was more suitable for location work than the Mitchell camera because of its lighter weight and direct reflex viewfinder. Duncan Petrie in *The British Cinematographer* affirms that, "In pursuit of realism, Lassally used three different film stocks, including the high-speed, 400 ASA Ilford HPS which had up until then only been considered suitable for newsreels and documentaries" (118). The use of portable cameras and fast stock allowed the use of natural lighting and gave a grainy look as part of the atmosphere. In this manner, the film managed to get positive reviews for the way it gave a poetic, almost dreamlike, effect to a derelict urban setting. In *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, Lassally and Richardson employed some *Nouvelle Vague* techniques, such as the speeding-up of images and dialogue, giving a subjective impression to some parts of the action to allow the spectator to perceive the characters subjective "reality".

An analysis of previous British films that dealt with working-class representations serves to stress the validity of these films representation of life on the run-down housing estates. For instances, in David Lean's *Hobson's Choice* (1954), the Dickensian ambiance is reinforced by the superficial staging of working-class life and the caricatured type characters. *Hobson's Choice*'s expressionistic aura created by Jack Hildyard gives an air of intimacy to this domestic comedy, a classic tale of the tyrannical and miserly father. In spite of the good performances of Charles Laughton and Brenda de Banzie, the spectator is not taken inside the working-class world, and the representation of the living conditions in Victorian Salford is reduced to short glimpses of the outside of terraced houses as opposed

to the back-to-back world of *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and the "enchanted" Salford canals in *A Taste of Honey*. Walter Lassaly's camera is not afraid of entering this "exotic" world where the community strives and communicates. In this way, the "dull studio artifice", mentioned before, gives way to a more honest and accurate representation of the ordinary life of ordinary people.

As Higson argued, the place becomes a metaphor for the protagonists' state of mind and it is interesting to note how the environment interacts with the characters in these films. In some of these films there is a clear opposition between city and country; the characters embark on trips to the countryside in order to escape the drudgery of the squalid city. The protagonists of *A Taste of Honey*, Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top*, *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and Anderson's *This Sporting Life* (1963) all have brief escapes into the countryside. These escapes are invested with a sense of freedom and enjoyment but the memories of city life and its problems taint these ephemeral country jaunts. In *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* the escapes have an even more crucial meaning, because Colin's training in the fields is the only way he can forget the hardship of life in a Borstal and the dreamlike speeded-up sequences stress the lyrical quality of the images. This was the first film starring Tom Courtenay, an unknown actor who would become one of the most identifiable faces of British film in the 1960s.

In Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), an adaptation of the Allan Sillitoe novel, Arthur Seaton is seen fishing beside a canal; what could be considered a scene of rural tranquillity is marred by the gloomy factories and the bleakness of the canal. A similar device is used in the already referred to canal scene in *A Taste of Honey* and, for Andrew Higson, "The power of these [scenes] is their capacity to represent both the extent to which the protagonist is trapped within the city, and the intensity with which he or she desires to escape" (15). As will be argued later, the desire to escape the entrapment of the working-class milieu of the industrial north is one of the key features of this strand of films.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning has the most thorough depiction of work in all the British New Wave films. As Robert Murphy affirms in *Sixties British Cinema*, "The film opens with the sort of sequence one might expect from a documentary-maker with an interest in the working class. In a busy, noisy factory a worker toiling at his lathe expresses his attitude to work" (18). It can be argued that this sequence is connected to

documentaries such as *Night Mail* and *Industrial Britain* (1931) in its depiction of life in a factory, but as soon as we are introduced to the main character there is a contrasting opposition to the paternalistic discourse of the Griersonian documentaries. In his direct address to camera, Arthur Seaton, played by Albert Finney (then a relatively unknown young actor), expresses his unfavourable opinion of work at the factory, thus affronting middle-class sensibilities. The Saturday night and Sunday morning of the title allude to the only time that working-class youths have free time to pursue their pleasures and this film evolves around the mischievous behaviour and picaresque adventures in dance halls and pubs of its hero. The recurring theme in the film is a society changing, where traditional forms of working-class expressions give way to new youth forms, and the change is alluded to by references to new attitudes. Arthur Seaton is different from the friendly and slightly gauche workers of previous features; he still reveals cheerfulness and has playful banter with his work mates, but he does not revere his superiors as other workers did in previous films. Interviewed by Eva Orbanz, Reisz observed that "the film began to ask the question whether material improvements in people's lives weren't going to be accompanied by a spiritual crisis" (58) and this suggests the director's intention in describing a changing working-class entranced by television and other forms of mass-consumption. It can be claimed that together with the desire to escape a dreaded provincial life, this depiction of working-class culture are the main themes of the New Wave (and Free Cinema) films. Analysed in this way, these films seem to have the same thematic concerns as their didactic and paternalistic documentary precedents, but there is a shift in the way the protagonists are depicted and characterised; theirs is a more acerbic and violent tone. Arthur is still essentially a decent working lad but, in his "voice", the spectator could sense the angriness of a generation, especially when he attacks television shows. In the face of a changing culture, Arthur Seaton strongly defends old working-class habits, such as confraternization in the pub.

The depiction of a new age of consumerism and sexual licentiousness is present in all of the New Wave films. John Hill in 'From the New Wave to 'Brit-Grit' " argued that these films, "reveal an anxiety about the demise of the 'traditional' working class, associated with work, community and an attachment to place in face of consumerism, mass culture and suburbanisation" (250-1). The critique of the new working-class attitude is clearly present in *Room at the Top*, the first film of this series. The story was adapted from

John Braine's novel and the film was a forerunner for all the "Kitchen-Sink" films. This factor might explain the rather stiff presence of Lawrence Harvey, unconvincingly portraying a Northern working-class youth determined to climb the social ladder and the almost total absence of establishing shots on location. In the film, Joe Lampton arrives in a new town and proceeds to seduce the daughter of a local entrepreneur, Susan, and ends up involved with Alice whom he sincerely loves. But the social pressures and plot development drive Alice to suicide, thus leaving Joe free to marry Susan.

One of the most striking tropes of the film is when Joe returns to his home town and his seen walking around the housing estate streets. This image of the slums would become emblematic of the New Wave films and, almost all of them have similar scenes. When Joe visits his aunt and uncle to announce his engagement to Susan, they criticize him for wanting to have more than he was allowed. Joe's relatives are depicted as traditional, hard working, self-effacing working-class types and leave the spectator with an impression of honesty and earnestness. Joe's aunt makes a striking remark, summarising the spirit of the ambitious youth, "I asked you about a girl and you only told me about her father's brass". In the end he is congratulated for his success, but this success was obtained at the cost of his integrity and Susan mistakes his tears of regret for tears of happiness. Joe's journey into the middle-class world is a kind of rite of passage, for if he appears as a wretched and ambitious character when rejecting his origins and leaving behind his people, the middle-class characters are portrayed as vain and bilious philistines. Nevertheless, Joe is also shown as sensitive and caring; he clearly loves Alice but his fear of blackmailing propels him to make the wrong choice. In the end, the price to pay for success is too high - personal happiness is eschewed in favour of money. Susan's father is presented as a kind of omen for Joe, for he obviously had the same provenance as Joe and he strenuously tries to deny him access to the middle-class world.

The film shows how social pressures and prejudices condition people's lives. The criticism is directed to all of society but, especially, to the affluent society of the late 1950s. But there is a kind of warmth directed towards the working-class characters. Joe's aunt and uncle and Alice and Joe's office mates are portrayed in a positive and warm manner leading the spectator to identify them with integrity and honesty, and Joe, in many respects unlike Arthur Seaton, is seen as a decent lad trying to make the best for himself. This film also has some scenes depicting work and, especially, male camaraderie; the

working environment and the pub are depicted as the only places where Joe and his friends can be themselves. It is in one of these scenes that Joe makes a remark summarising his attitude towards Susan and women in general; when he sees Susan for the first time a friend warns him *'That's* not for you lad" and he responds "But *that's* what *I'm going to have*" (emphasis added).

This remark is a good example of how Joe sees Susan as a kind of trophy in a class war. Joe's seduction of Susan is seen as a kind of revenge against her parents and her RAF officer suitor, in particular, and against what they stand for, in general. It can be argued that the film did not condone Joe's behaviour, in fact in the end his marriage to Susan is a kind of punishment, but the treatment of women in this film and others reveals some degree of uneasiness. This is what led Hill to write in *Sex, Class and Realism*, that in these films "the central theme and organising principle of the narrative is that of upward social mobility. […] Central to this process is the seduction of or marriage to a woman from higher social class" (157). However it seems reductive to describe the films as plain illustrations of male attitudes towards women, for if there is an implicit social critique in these films, this critique is directed towards society at large and not specifically to women.

In *Look Back in Anger*, Jimmy Porter constantly vents his anger on his wife. In this film the protagonist rejects the status acquired by wedding and uses women as an outlet for his anger; his disillusionment with society is directed towards women. He attacks his wife because she has a higher social pedigree, thus linking the upper-classes with effeminacy. Jimmy Porter's abuse of his wife is linked with the widespread fears surrounding women's independence and sexuality. Hill argues that the real subject of *Look Back in Anger*, "was neither social injustice nor hypocrisy but the debasement and degradation of women" (25), but by saying this he is ignoring the historical context in the which the film appeared. As Robert Murphy affirms in *Sixties British Cinema*:

> Jimmy's abuse of Alison is not due to some outdated, sadistic misogyny but because he is incapable of resolving the dilemma his wife poses for him in terms of values and principles, and Allison is too conventional. […] Women do come heavily under attack from the Angry Young Men, but […] it is less women as such than the ethos of 'effeminacy' they object to (29).

This objection to effeminacy leads to the upholding of masculine "values" and "virtues", for all of these films seem to celebrate masculinity in some manner or another. For instances, in *This Sporting Life*, adapted from the David Storey's novel, the rugby players are portrayed as demi-gods or gladiators ready for the sacrifice in front of the cheering crowd. In this film, which has wonderfully photographed rugby scenes, Arthur Machin (played by Richard Harris) is a local sports hero of a second-rate Yorkshire rugby team, determined in his ambition and brutal in his social relations. He begins an affair with his landlady Mrs Hammonds, an emotionally repressed and frigid widow played by Rachel Roberts and the plot revolves around their relationship and Mrs Hammonds's refusal of his advances. Machin is depicted as determined and pugnacious, always getting his own way as when he succeeds in convincing the club director to sign him and when he manages to enter a dance-hall. Contrastingly, Mrs Hammonds is fragile, repressed and incapable of escaping poverty and the petty life of her neighbourhood. Interestingly, this is the only film in which the leading female character is in worse economical conditions than the men; she is the one that despises the symbols of mass-consumption: the car and the television set. In spite of his rudeness, Arthur is depicted as wanting to give a better life to Mrs Hammonds and his attempts to seduce her appear as poignant appeals for love. Both of them do not know how to express their emotions towards other people. In stressful situations Arthur resorts to verbal abuse; Mrs Hammonds hides away.

A Kind of Loving, directed by John Schlesinger[19], was not produced by Woodfall, but it belongs clearly to this cycle of films. In it, Vic is symbolically castrated when he marries Ingrid and goes to live with her mother. His "imprisonment" in an all-female household makes him lose his potency and he no longer makes love to his wife. In Sydney Furie's *The Leather Boys* (1963), Pete retreats into a quasi-homosexual relation with Reggie, his biker friend, because he is unable to identify himself with Dot (played by Rita Tushingham), his wife that appears completely seduced by consumerism and prefers to spend money dyeing her hair, leaving all the domestic chores undone. Dot is portrayed as an immature girl devoted to the values of consumerism and mass media as Pete hangs out in the biker café affiliating himself to an almost exclusively male world of motorbikes. In this world, women are deemed to be just an accessory for the bike. Influenced by Reggie, Pete buys a bigger bike wishing to assert himself as a male at the same time as his marriage

[19] Who also directed *Terminus* (1960) a documentary about a railway station clearly indebted to the didactic and explanatory tradition of the Griersonian documentary.

is collapsing. When he moves in with Reggie the frontier between male camaraderie and homosexuality is almost crossed.

In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* Arthur has an affair with a married woman and tries to force her to have an abortion and, when he finally settles down he is reprimanded by his girlfriend for throwing stones at a building. Arthur is not as angry as Jimmy Porter or as ambitious as Joe Lampton, but he shares with them a sense of decency and class consciousness. Despite the negativity that these characters carry around, often there is a friend of the protagonist that seems more decent and less driven, and who often acts as a corrective to the former character, as Cliff does in *Look Back in Anger*.

In spite of all the differences, Robert Murphy states that what these working-class heroes share is their "almost obsessive interest in women, particularly when contrasted with their urbane predecessors (Dirk Bogarde, Jack Hawkins, Kenneth Moore, John Mills)" (32). This interest in women can be connected with a search for identity and masculinity in a world increasingly feminine, where women became the biggest benefactors of the social changes that had occurred. That is why in these films, plays and novels, women seem to be identified with the new mass culture and the working-class heroes when breaking away from their traditional culture find themselves lost in a world that does not abide by their rules.

Since World War Two women had progressively entered the traditional, almost exclusive masculine world: the factory. But these films show women belonging to the domestic space, whereas the workplace is almost exclusively occupied by men. Women are identified with domesticity and, as seen before, when men are confined to this feminine space they literally lose their potency (as in *A Kind of Loving*). Nevertheless the films do show women acquiring greater visibility in traditional masculine places, such as the pub. The protagonists of these films are helpless spectators of decaying traditional working-class entertainments. The new amusement places are identified as women's locales where men feel uneasily, most notably the Bingo Hall so prominent in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

The criticism of the new mass culture is clearly apparent in some of these films. For instances, in *A Kind of Loving*, Vic is prevented from watching a brass band concert (a traditional working-class activity) and must stay at home with his wife and her mother watching an inane television show. Television was the easiest target to attack due to the

medium's identification with the affluent society. In *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, Colin's mother "fancy man" brings a television into his house, thus angering Colin who thinks she is not honouring his father's memory. When his family is watching television he goes into his father's room and symbolically burns a pound note, rejecting the mindless consumerism of his mother. Colin's alienation from his family leads him to a life of petty crime and to his imprisonment. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, when Arthur tries to tell his family something that had happened in a store he realizes no one is listening to him because they are entranced by television.

The Entertainer tells the story of Archie Rice, a decaying dance-hall artist played by Lawrence Olivier. The decrepit theatre is almost empty and Archie is not understood by young people who do not appreciate his type of humour. A young girl even says that his problem is that he is not a television artist. The decline of long-established entertainments is directly linked to television and the decline of the empire. Almost at the same time that Archie's father falls dead during a pathetic attempt to get back to the stage, Archie's son (played by Albert Finney) is killed in Suez. In *Look Back in Anger* the criticism is directed towards the tabloid press, and the real and honest activity is going to Jazz clubs.

In this manner Jazz music, brass bands and music-hall symbolize traditional working-class activities and are shown as mainly masculine activities that are being dismissed in favour of television, a predominantly feminine and passive activity. What emerges in these films is a respect for a traditional working-class and hostility to the corruptions of modern mass-culture and this decline stands for the moral and spiritual decay of the time. This idea is reminiscent of Grierson's attacks on escapist cinema, its place being taken now by television. The constant allusions to mass-culture lead back to Humphrey Jennings's *Spare Time* and the Free Cinema documentaries *O Dreamland* and *Momma Don't Allow*. The young protagonists of the New Wave films could be the punters that filled the Jazz club and Jo's trip to Blackpool is a reprise of *O Dreamland* with the predominance of music and alluring lights. The ambivalence towards mass culture and amusements is an ongoing theme in these filmmakers work and is stressed by its association with the new working-class.

As referred to before, one of the main themes of these films is that of social climbing. This social climbing is sometimes played down in favour of escapist attempts, for the protagonists try, usually unsuccessfully, to escape what oppresses them, family,

work or, as discussed before, the city itself. The ephemeral escapades to the country-side are presented as doomed attempts to enliven a gloomy life, but in some of these films, the characters struggle to find new alternatives to their existence. In *A Taste of Honey*, when Jo finds out that her mother does not care enough and is not capable of having a steady life, she tries to find refuge in the love of a black sailor, she then becomes pregnant and the sailor disappears. Jo leaves home and tries to establish a decent home for herself and her homosexual friend, Geoff. The shabby room acquires then an almost magic capacity for soothing the sad existence of this odd couple; the room is perceived as a safe haven where Jo grows from her childlike existence to adulthood. This suggests that the dysfunctional working-class family was not capable of educating and provide a stable home for their teenage children, thus leading them to a life of crime. In almost all of these films, parents are portrayed quite negatively, often being absurd or irresponsible or just plainly conventional. In the end, Jo's mother persuades her to move back home, but the idea that there is an alternative to the shabby slum life pervades.

In *The Leather Boys*, Pete leaves his wife to live with Reggie. The times they are together are shown as an idyllic instance of happiness and male camaraderie that is forever thwarted when Pete finds out Reggie's homosexuality. Pete is then left alone when Reggie embarks on a ship with a homosexual crew and finds his wife in bed with one of the bikers. Pete is represented as the traditional working-class lad that cannot adapt to the present times and is depicted as incapable of change; he is unable to connect to his wife's needs and he is only happy when he hangs out in the biker's café. It can be argued that this representation of male youth as backward-looking and overly traditional implies a criticism of the values the film seems to want to promote. That is, although Pete is shown as a nice young man, the only one in his family that cares about his grandmother, he is also depicted as the only loser in the end as Dot finds comfort with one of his rivals and Reggie assumes his homosexuality.

A similar tone is present in Schlesinger's adaptation of a Keith Waterhouse's novel, *Billy Liar* (1963) where Billy Fisher, interpreted by Tom Courtenay, appears as a Northern boy lost in daydreaming fantasies of escape. Faced with a horrendous unsupportive family, quaint girlfriends and a dull job, Billy dreams that he is the emperor of Ambrosia, a fantasy land he constantly returns to. He has also the dream of becoming a comedy writer in London, but his family incessantly derides his hopes for a future away from Bradford. This

film can be considered to belong to the New Wave group of features due to its theme of escape and its setting in a drab industrial town with its dance-halls, cobbled streets and grim housing-estates, but departs the gloomy mood significantly with Billy's fantasies. He is seen on a military parade staged in his honour and shooting dead his family. Not only the mood is different but also the film presents the spectator with a new type of female star, Julie Christie, who plays the role of Liz a young, glamorous and uninhibited girl that tries to persuade Billy to leave Bradford with her. Once again, the male hero is seen as incapable of taking the definitive step towards a new life, which suggests that women have less to lose than their masculine counterparts. Liz is depicted as completely the opposite of Billy's other two girlfriends that only wish to settle down and marry. This film can be seen as a foreword to the Swinging Sixties films because of its introduction of Julie Christie, the perfect embodiment of the upwardly-mobile and sexually active woman. At the last minute Billy decides not to embark on the train and, as Liz goes away to London, the New Wave thematic is symbolically left behind so the films to come would have a different setting and a more diverse subject matter; Schlesinger's next film starring Julie Christie, *Darling* (1964) can be seen as the continuation of Liz's story, but with a completely different tone, when she arrives in London.

Both *Billy Liar* and *The Leather Boys* introduce new grounds for discussion to the "Kitchen-Sink" film and perhaps this is why they are considered to be the last of this type of film. Despite Hill's emphasis on the misogyny aggressively displayed by the male protagonists of these films it cannot denied that they covered ground previously overlooked by mainstream directors who portrayed working-class environments in a superficial and caricatured way. In Ealing comedies, Gainsborough melodramas and Rank films the working-class characters were usually depicted as stereotypes: the Cockney wide-boy, the cheerful factory worker or the dangerous Teddy Boy. One of the biggest achievements of these films was in giving voice to the marginalised sectors of British society. As seen before, the inclusion of "authentic" ethnic and sexual minorities characters was a feature of some "Kitchen-Sink" films even if, sometimes, the adaptation seems forced and inauthentic as in *Look Back in Anger*, in which Jimmy tries to defend an Indian vendor from the attacks of the market inspector. The social group that has the biggest exposure was that of teenagers and young persons. As discussed before, the 1950s brought the recognition of teenagers as a social group with an ever increasing spending power and

visibility. According to Christine Geraghty in "Women and Sixties British Cinema: The Development of the 'Darling' Girl":

> It is not surprising that debates about youth can be found in films of the period since the cinema as industry had much at stake in youth and its pleasures. Changing leisure patterns, including the arrival of television, meant that increasingly distributors and exhibitors relied on young people for their audiences (155).

This linkage to a largely commercial approach towards film production does not, however, overshadow the breakthrough in terms of what had become the subject matter of film in Britain.

The loosening of censorship and the introduction of the "X" certificate for films with an adult theme, as opposed to the previous "H" certificate designated for Horror and cheap Exploitation features, lead to an opening-up in the treatment of social and sexual themes. The first film with an adult content to earn the "X" certificate was *Room at the Top* due to its treatment of sexuality[20]. Interestingly, almost all of these films dealt with the questions raised by teenage sexuality, premarital sex and extra marital affairs and this can be linked to the appearance of several studies and inquiries about the sexual habits of the British. In *Room at the Top*, *A Kind of Loving*, *A Taste of Honey* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* there are unwanted pregnancies that force the characters into new situations of social pressure. Except in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, all of these situations involve exclusively very young people. It can be maintained that these films tried to warn of the consequences of unprotected sexual relations.

This idea ties up with the Documentary Movement's didacticism and claims to be the educators of the masses. As Higson points out in "Space, Place, Spectacle", these films celebrated, " 'universal human values'. It is that same demand voiced by the documentarists of the 1930's that films should be about the dignity of the working man (sic)" (4). Certainly, this "dignity of the working man" can be extended to the dignity of the working woman and their teenage children and in spite of all the paternalistic

[20] The film was marketed as a "Vicious story of lust and ambition", thus betraying its commercial origins. The "X" certificate was introduced in 1951 to permit the licensing of films with a certain amount of sex and violence for viewing by adults. See Jeffrey Richards, "British Film Censorship" (*The British Cinema Book*. Ed. Robert Murphy. (London: BFI, 1997) 167-177.

accusations (the same accusations discussed in relation to the Documentary Movement films), these films are interested in an almost sociological manner in the life of ordinary people. The "realist" premises enunciated by Raymond Williams and Colin MacCabe seem to be embodied in these films in their tendency to break away from long-established visions of British society and are connected, via Jennings's work, to John Grierson's disdain for mass-culture. It can be contended that this love-hate relationship with the masses, the concerns with society's anxieties and a claim to authenticity are the most visible legacies of the Documentary Movement to the New Wave filmmakers.

The films were greeted with enthusiasm by audiences and critics alike and despite the short-livedness of the period (1958-1963), the New Wave movement was successful in its challenging of the traditional British cinema industry. For Geoff Brown in "Paradise Found and Lost":

> The British New Wave of Richardson, Anderson, Reisz and Schlesinger was greeted with fanfare because the films faced people's emotions head on and swept away what had grown to be regarded as dull studio artifice. Cameras went out and about, especially up north, far from the Rank Organisation domain in Pinewood, where Dirk Bogarde preened in pretty pullovers (188).

The fascination with the "exotic" north was coupled with the fresh and raw talent of a group of actors, mostly from the north, trained in experimental theatre. These films gave an opportunity to non-university trained actors, such as Rita Tushingham, Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay, Richard Harris, Rachel Roberts, Alan Bates and Julie Christie who brought with them different accents and a boldness that was conspicuously absent from British screens.

Seen in this perspective, the British New Wave films can be incorporated in what Andrew Higson identified as the "documentary-realist tradition" because of the use of documentary techniques, non-professional and unknown actors, the interest in working-class characters and environment, a social-democratic concern for the education of the masses and an ambivalence about mass-culture's consequences on society. As discussed before, these filmmakers disagreed substantially with the premises established by John Grierson and looked to Humphrey Jennings as their artistic mentor and inspirer. Nevertheless, the themes dealt by the Free Cinema/New Wave filmmakers have much in

common with them and thus it can be argued that these films continue the aforementioned tradition. Their biggest challenge to the British film industry was in the introduction of new thematic grounds in filmmaking and the establishing of alternative and viable companies outside traditional London circles and cliques.

III. The Documentary-Drama Television Play and Film

The 1960s saw the unveiling of the Swinging London phenomenon as the city assumed international leadership in fashion, style and pop music. The development of the so-called beat-groups, the hundreds of Beatles imitators, Mary Quant's invention of the mini-skirt and the numbers of painters, writers and photographers that came to live in London gave the city a reputation for being the most avant-garde and happening place in the world.

Swinging London had its share of films; some of them became very famous worldwide. From Richard Lester's Beatles vehicles *A Hard Days' Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965) to Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1968), the city became the creative as well the chic place to be. Attracted by the success of British social realism and the cycle of James Bond films (that had begun with Terence Young's *Dr No* in 1962), Hollywood began to invest heavily in British cinema and the initial result was the literary-historic epic typified by David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *Dr Zhivago* (1965).

Another consequence of this investment was the arrival of celebrated directors, either looking for money or running away from political prosecution. Joseph Losey, a blacklisted American refugee from the McCarthy trials, established his name on the international scene with a characteristic mixture of art-house and fashion in which the opposite poles can be represented his collaborations with Harold Pinter *The Servant* (1963), *Accident* (1967), and *The Go-Between* (1971) and the cartoonish *Modesty Blaise* (1966). Another American that established himself in Britain was Stanley Kubrick who directed, among others, *Lolita* (1962), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) and the controversial *A Clockwork Orange* (1971, but banned in the United Kingdom until 2000). This film was the adaptation of the Anthony Burgess's novel that depicted an alienated youth in a futuristic setting and it expressed many of the anxieties about youth that came all the way from the New Wave films. Another émigré of the time was Roman Polanski, who directed another challenging film in London, *Repulsion* (1965). Lewis Gilbert's *Alfie* (1966) is an interesting hybrid film, oscillating between New Wave and Singing London aesthetics.

These examples show that London was becoming a sort of art-house haven for out-of-favour and polemical filmmakers. Even the notorious British film censorship could not restrain some of the most enduring and imaginative directors from having a taste of the creative atmosphere of those times. Of course, this atmosphere was not specific to London; the 1960s were a decade of great social and cultural turmoil in both Europe and the United

States. The French *Nouvelle Vague* directors François Truffaut, Alain Resnais and Jean-Luc Godard influenced many aspiring filmmakers and left their mark as the forebearers of most of art-house and avant-garde cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. The demonstrations against war, the civil rights movement, the students' strikes and protests marked an age of defiance and cultural experimentation. Even in Hollywood some filmmakers managed to break through censorship and accepted commercial practices, as can be seen in Sam Peckimpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and in Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), for example.

The films made in Britain mentioned above show that "realism" was not the preferred mode of that era. Some of the films had a lighter approach to the social problems of the day (as in Schlesinger's *Darling*) and displayed an emancipated and joyous youth carelessly enjoying the benefits of affluence. Others like *The Servant*, *Repulsion* and *Blow Up* had a more serious approach, but the "realistic" mode gave way to psychological dramas exploiting society's darker side perceived in an almost hyper-real sense of the world, like the film that seemed to sum up the 1960s, Nicolas Roeg's *Performance* (1969).

The New Wave directors evolved from the gritty portrayals of Northern life to a wider set of interests. After *Billy Liar* the group disbanded and some moved to the United States trying to find further impulse for their careers. The reason for this rested in the British cinema industry's structural problems and their audience's preference for the escapist fantasies of Swinging London. Tony Richardson achieved enormous success with his Oscar-winning adaptation of Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones* (1963). In spite of having Albert Finney in the main role, this film was very different from Richardson's previous ventures. He managed to make a Swinging London film set in the eighteenth century depicting the picaresque love adventures of Tom Jones, played by Finney with his typical cheerfulness and arrogance. John Schlesinger moved to the United States and obtained success with *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), a film clearly inspired by Andy Warhol's bohemian artistic clique. As for Lindsay Anderson, he directed a very critical and radical attack on British institutions with his Brechtian trilogy of *If...* (1968), *O Lucky Man* (1973) and *Britannia Hospital* (1982).

By the end of the 1960s, most American companies had withdrawn finance for British-made films and the cinema industry there collapsed. Swinging London, like all media-hyped fads, faded away and, as the attendance figures declined, as an increasing

number of cinemas closed down and as the number of features plummeted[21], the optimism of the 1960s gave way to deep pessimism in the seventies.

At about the same time the first New Wave films were being produced, the Manchester-based television company, Granada, created what came to be known as an institution in the history of British Television: *Coronation Street* (1960 -). This serial describes the lives of ordinary people in the working-class environment of Salford and their everyday problems and happenings. What is striking about this serial is the fact that it is still running nowadays, more than forty years after the first transmission, and the way it embodies and carries the flag for British social-realist dramatic production. Another serial that became hugely popular and served as a training ground for many filmmakers and technicians was the BBC production, *Z Cars* (1962-65), again a low-key account of police life in a Northern Merseyside town.

Interestingly these television productions absorbed the realist tendencies of the New Wave films even when cinematic trends turned away from "realism" to escapism. At about the same time the New Wave film directors changed the subject matter of their films, television producers embarked on experiments with what was going to be called the "naturalistic play". As John Corner states in *British TV Dramadocumentary: Origins and Developments*, these serials, "were often based on intensive research, and their stories were given an extensive grounding in social circumstance, frequently realized in location shooting" (40). It can be argued that the tendency to base television work around research and the desire to give credibility to an emerging form connected these serials to the documentary tradition.

In the face of a collapsing and hostile cinema industry, many experienced or potential directors, scriptwriters and editors turned to the new medium that offered them the support of an already established institution (the BBC). It is important to notice the tremendous impact that television had, and still has, on the continuous production of "quality" and "serious" drama. Due to its popular following, television suffered the derision of critics from the tabloid press to academic scholars. Anyone who tried to work

[21] For a statistical analysis of these facts see, Nick Roddick, "If the United States Spoke Spanish, we would have a Film Industry" in Martyn Audy and Nick Roddick .Eds. *British Cinema Now* (BFI. London: 1985) 3-18.
For a discussion of financial problems besetting British film production companies see Robert Murphy, "Three Companies: Boyd's Co., HandMade and Goldcrest" in Audy and Roddick, op. cit. 43-56.

seriously on the subject found themselves criticised and mocked. As John Caughie affirms in *Television Drama*:

> Such voyages into strange environments did not proceed without resistance back home: the popular press scoffed at 'Professors of Soap'; the academy dismissed this 'Mickey Mouse' subject, good for attracting students but not part of the serious academic agenda […] (5).

Arguably, anyone dealing with such volatile and polemic issues as high culture versus the culture of the people ends up being sneered at by the guardians of the "high culture". This prejudice is still present in dealing with such popular forms as films and television drama, but the single fact that these types of cultural product attract wide audiences and generate fruitful diversity seems a valid enough reason for their investigation as a mode of cultural production. George Brandt in his introduction to *British Television Drama* links this devaluation of the visual arts as intrinsic to British cultural values and stresses the attacks on television drama made by the television critics of the time:

> What is perhaps more surprising is that journalists, too, should for a long time have vied with one another in denigrating television as the goggle box, the idiot's lantern, chewing gum for the eyes or moving wallpaper (2).

In the United Kingdom, this point seems especially relevant due to the consistently high-quality work produced at the BBC and Granada Television in the 1960s and 1970s.

For reasons of clarity John Caughie's "serious drama" systematization will be adopted here, involving the following three formal categories:

1. A category which derives from the theatre, and finds its classical form in the single play;
2. A category which is associated with cinema, and finds its most recognizable form in a number of the films commissioned by Channel 4;
3. A category which is more or less specific to television, and finds its forms in certain authored or adapted series and serials. (7).

This chapter will deal specifically with the first category, relating the work of Ken Loach (and Mike Leigh) to the particularities of television production and the continuities of the British realist tradition. Later, the fundamental role played by Channel 4 in the support of this tradition and the work of both Ken Loach and Mike Leigh will be asserted.

1. Ken Loach

The work done in television drama between the 1950s and the 1970s constitutes a "Golden Age" of television production. John Caughie links this "Golden Age" with the particular political and cultural setting of the 1950s. As seen in the previous chapter, the 1950s marked the beginning of the age of dissent and the emergence of a counter-culture. Caughie relates the Angry Young Men phenomenon with the questioning of established models and refers to 1956 as the pivotal year of this revolution in which "values were being tested and rules rewritten" (57). For him, the demise of the British film industry and the cultural insignificance of most of the films in the late 1960s and early 1970s made television drama "one of the places in which surprises might occur and in which boundaries might be shifted a little" (58).

According to George Brandt, and also stressed by John Tulloch[22], two factors were essential for the achievement of such quality drama production. Firstly, the quality of the material produced by writers such as David Mercer, Harold Pinter, Jim Allen and Jeremy Sandford coupled with the tenacity of producers such as Sydney Newman and Tony Garnett; secondly, the introduction, circa 1957, of videotape recording which liberated the form from the constraints of live transmission (18-9).

Sydney Newman would become one key figure in the development of this form. Having worked for the National Film Board of Canada (established by John Grierson) he was invited by ABC to take charge of the *Armchair Theatre* series which had started in 1957, and later to become Head of the Drama Department at the BBC. According to Caughie:

> *Armchair Theatre's* achievement was to shake loose the metropolitan, theatrical, and patrician codes which had defined the role of television drama in a public service system. […] It benefited from the regional structure of the ITV network, and brought the same non-metropolitan perspective to television drama which had revitalized the theatre in 1956 (74).

[22] See John Tulloch, Introduction. *Television Drama – Agency, Audience and Myth* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 1-28.

In this manner Caughie links the development of television drama to the New Wave phenomenon and due to its domestic scale, it continued the "Kitchen-Sink" subjects dealt with by the earlier films. This idea is reinforced by Brandt, who argues that this tendency was a "shove in the direction of surface realism" and that the new technical and political possibilities made it feasible "to bring in non-professionals, to tap greater spontaneity in the actors, and to give a greater feeling of verisimilitude to a production all around" (19).

This trend was to be epitomised by the work done under the supervision of the producer Tony Garnett. He worked very closely with some of the writers mentioned above and with the director Ken Loach who had abandoned Oxford University, where he studied law, in order to become an actor, and later a director. His first job at the BBC was directing the short drama play *Catherine* (1964), produced by James MacTaggart, and three episodes of *Z Cars*, during which time he tried to overcome his complete lack of formal training.

At that time, BBC drama production was dominated by MacTaggart (as producer) and Troy Kennedy Martin (as writer) that had a strong stance against the "naturalistic play". The basic idea behind Troy Kennedy Martin's reasoning was that the "naturalistic play" was indebted to a "theatre of dialogue" and evolved from "Hollywood film techniques", thus forcing the director to engage in "photographing faces talking and faces reacting"[23] (100). Seen from this perspective, MacTaggart and Martin disliked the stiff and staged BBC adaptations from established novels. One of the main reasons for this was the fact that some of the plays were being broadcasted live and, more importantly, almost all of them were being shot in an electronic studio flooded with artificial light and from fixed camera positions.

This distaste for the "naturalistic play" must be understood in a context where the drama departments of the main networks had not been able to establish a distinctive genre of their own. Even if MacTaggart and Martin's theories do not hold much water if analysed seriously, that is, they confounded technical impediments with formal mistakes, their roles as innovators must be conceded in their commitment to try to establish a distinguished and unique television genre. Ken Loach worked with both of them in his early plays at the BBC, such as *Diary of a Young Man* (1964), but his first groundbreaking play would be *Up the Junction* (1965), based on a story by Nell Dunn and produced by MacTaggart. This play would be important because it was Loach's first foray into the working-class world

[23]Quoted in John McGrath, *TV Drama: The Case Against Naturalism* (*Sight and Sound*. 46,2. London: BFI, 1977) 100-5.

and it would mark the beginning of the creative relationship with Tony Garnett (he was the script editor). The plot was episodic and it dealt with the lives of working girls that lived around the area of Clapham Junction in south London. The play had a striking pace with its juxtaposition of sound and image and non-linear montage, clearly indebted to French *Nouvelle Vague* techniques which were quite fashionable then. John Caughie also relates it with the modernist tradition of British documentary, mainly deriving from Humphrey Jennings and considers Nell Dunn's technique as similar to Mass Observation: "Nell Dunn's script for *Up the Junction* […] depend[s] on an ethnographic ear for fragments of the everyday, collecting her 'reality fragments' and 'little stories' like one of the part-time researchers for Mass Observation" (120). This is significant because Nell Dunn actually recorded dialogue from the local people in order to get a more authentic feel and, in the play, there is a pub scene in which the actors talk to the camera as if they were being interviewed.

As we will see later, Loach will deploy these modernist techniques and other Brechtian devices as part of his youthful enthusiasm for the medium. But the importance of this play cannot be underestimated for it gives clues to Loach's following experimentations with the genre. An important factor in this production was the use of 16 millimetre film stock, which allowed the production unit to shoot on location and to give a more honest representation of the character's background. The use of film stock was not a common practice at the BBC so the crew had to conjure some means of fooling the Drama Department into accepting the idea. Loach explains his method in an interview given to Graham Fuller for the book *Loach on Loach*:

> The BBC did allow you two or three days to do location shooting, like shots of people getting into a car, driving somewhere […]. So we said, 'OK, we'll take those two or three days,' but we actually managed to nick four days of location shooting altogether (13).

The move to film was a key event, for it allowed the directors to eschew the studio for location shooting, which granted more authenticity and diversity to the plays; no longer had television drama to be a poor and stagy photographed simulation of theatre productions.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Loach's work was almost exclusively done for television, but he also managed to direct some films and, due their close relation with his television plays, they are worth mentioning here. His first film was *Poor Cow* (1967), again based around a novel by Nell Dunn and starring Carol White (who had appeared in *Up the Junction*) and Terence Stamp. This film has a clear link to the play mentioned above and this is due mainly to Dunn's script and the use of similar locations. This tale of Cockney wide-boys, and the consequences of their activities on their families, shows a preoccupation with the housing conditions of London's dispossessed. The film has a kind of mixed quality, that is, it employs such Brechtian techniques as intertitles and direct addresses to the camera but the Donovan songs give it a Swinging London gloss too. There are even some scenes, for instances, when Joy and Dave make love in a waterfall, in which the film resembles a shiny television commercial. But this love affair between a petty criminal and his best friend's girlfriend also has a grittiness which sets it apart from the Swinging London films; the grim locations and the evocation of working-class life make it close enough to the New Wave films, rendering this film as a kind of hybrid. This hybridism can be explained by Loach's inexperience in the trade, and because he was working outside his usual medium with some of his regular collaborators but with a different producer (Joseph Janni).

With her work with Ken Loach, Carol White would become a counterpoint figure to Julie Christie. She would epitomise the working-class heroine of some plays and the film mentioned above. Her roles as a working-class girl adrift in London would grant her the same importance in Loach's work as Rita Tushingham had in the New Wave films. Perhaps the most important piece of work she undertook with Ken Loach was her role as Cathy in the television play *Cathy Come Home* (1966). This play became immensely influential in television drama when it was screened, and became the centre of dispute and polemic. Arguably, *Cathy Come Home* can be considered the most important work that Loach did for television, and it certainly is his most famous piece.

The main reason behind the success of this play was the theme dealt with in it: homelessness. The plot concerned the plight of a provincial girl coming to London and her struggle to keep her family together. The first scenes are shot like a television commercial, Cathy falls in love with Reggie and they marry and settle in a well appointed flat. The problems start when Cathy gets pregnant and Reggie loses his job due to an accident. This

initial catastrophe will trigger the disgrace that falls upon them, for they have to leave their flat and are unable to pay for a mortgage and no one rents them a place because of the baby. They find themselves in run-down temporary accommodation and the family keeps on growing; one of the last places they go into is a caravan site, but their stay ends when a fire destroys the dwellings. Finally, Cathy and her children are taken into temporary accommodation in a hostel for the homeless. The place is not pleasing and husbands are not allowed and this fact draws Reggie away from Cathy. When her time at the hostels ends, her children are taken away from her and Cathy is left alone. The bitterness of the story together with the denunciation of insensitive social workers and the injustice of temporary accommodation schemes led to public uproar and the issue was even raised in parliament.

The play was scripted by Jeremy Sandford (Nell Dunn's husband), and its author spent a lot of time researching it, which involved him dressing up as a homeless person in order to get access to the hostels. The extensive work done by Sandford appears in the play as statistics are shown; voices off discuss numbers and solutions. The plight of the dispossessed is cruelly and clearly displayed in this film where Carol White's performance stands out and it was the public's identification with her character that managed to cause great distress to viewers. This play is credited with having raised a lot of questions in Britain due its exposure of lack of housing and the numbers of children taken into care each week due to homelessness. According to Martin Banham in "Jeremy Sandford":

> *Cathy Come Home* is acknowledge by Des Wilson, founder of the charity Shelter, as having 'created public uproar', and it certainly contributed to the foundation of Shelter itself and to official action in the housing field. Husbands, for instance, were allowed to stay with their wives and families where before they had been separated (211).

This play seems to be a sour take on the Swinging London phenomenon as the provincial girl's dreams of succeeding in the capital are thwarted by the couple's naivety. For instance, they obviously try to live well above their financial capabilities and their lack of family planning propels them to misery and Reggie's solution to every problem is carelessly uttering the sentence "Reg will fix it". It can be argued that the message purveyed by the play is that the big city is not a nice place for adventurous young couples.

Along with a critique on their lack of education there is an implicit attack on the institutions and people that should care for the less protected. This attack on government policies and middle-class complacency towards the poor will become a trademark of Loach, a tirelessly *engagé* director who spurns all forms of glamour and escapism.

The strong political and accusatory tone of this play (and others) raised a lot of questions about the "authenticity" of the scenes portrayed and, by extension, about the formal nature of the television play in itself. As *Up the Junction* had before, the screenings of *Cathy Come Home* raised a lot of criticisms from the Conservative press. According to some journalists of *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *Evening Star* and *The Daily Telegraph*, the play left viewers confounded by the mixture of actuality and drama. Wyndham Goldie, writing in *The Sunday Telegraph*, complained that:

> Such a description surely means we are being offered a production which the BBC accepts as a style, and which deliberately blurs the distinction between fact and fiction. Viewers have a right to know whether what they are being offered is real or invented (14).

This plea "for the right to know" was a common critique of several of Ken Loach's plays. What this reasoning implies is that the public cannot distinguish between reality and fiction. This paternalistic attitude towards the viewers shows a fear of the content of the plays and a clear attack on a much "too" liberal BBC that allowed these young mavericks to get away with social and political criticism. Julian Petley argues in "Ken Loach and the Question of Censorship" that, "the question of documentary drama was, for many Conservative politicians and newspapers, little more than a convenient excuse for an exercise in BBC-bashing" (54). The attack on these plays can be interpreted as an attack on the Reithian and Griersonian tradition of denunciation of social injustices and problems. Conservative politicians and journalists were well aware of the immense popularity of *The Wednesday Play*, and the way these plays were so passionately discussed shows the influence that they had on viewers.

This mixture of fact and fiction would become known as documentary drama for the way the plays construed a fiction grounded on sociological fact and John Corner defines it as "a form of *play*, but [it] is a form that is seen to develop a documentary character either as a result of its scale of referentiality to specific real events *or* because of

its manner of depiction" (35-6). In "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama", John Caughie connects the "documentary look" (26) with Émile Zola's experimental method, thus outlining the inherent contradiction of the form:

> Observed *and constructed*. The documentary look is not the perfect vision of an actual world, but operates, as does the dramatic, within a specific rhetoric which is not innocent, offering an objective, true social space, but which works within rules and strategies to produce a social space which is also a narrative, fictional space (27).

Cathy Come Home is reminiscent of *Up the Junction* and *Poor Cow* in its use of south London locations and of Carol White as the main star. What these films have in common is their formal hybridism, with its mixture of Brechtian anti-naturalistic techniques and *cinema vérité* style documentary. Loach seems to progressively move away from his experiences with French *Nouvelle Vague* techniques and tries to achieve a grittier and more "natural" feel to his work. In an interview conducted by John Hill, Loach claims that "Some things [Brechtian ideas] have stayed: it's just some of the external mannerisms that have become rather tedious" (160), thus expressing why he moved away from a flashy style to a more restrained and observational mode. Undoubtedly, what made these films so appealing and revolutionary in the first place was this mix of almost antagonistic modes of filmmaking.

The Big Flame (1969), written by Jim Allen, would confirm Loach's move towards naturalism. This play was a fictional account of the possibility of dock workers taking control by themselves of the docks. There is a clear documentary style and feel, for the camera is never obtrusive and the scenes appear to develop spontaneously in front of the camera. The film privileges round-table discussions and the filmmaker's taking sides is clearly expressed by the depiction of the conspiracy between union officers, the government and the dock owners to defeat the workers. The union officers demark themselves off from the positions taken by the worker's committee that wants better wages and security. What made this play so polemic was the raw way it displayed a combination of efforts determined to subjugate the workers and their legitimate demands. The workers' self-management cannot succeed because it is sparking rebellion amongst other workers and it is the subversive nature of the strike that prompts the military attack on the strikers.

In the end a judge claims that Marxist doctrine (fashionable in some universities) "if placed in the hands of the working man is as dangerous as a loaded gun in the hands of a criminal".

This play attracted even more criticism from various journalists and politicians; its clear political content - the people that should defend workers essentially do not want to jeopardise their own privileges – outraged several BBC directors. The main theme dealt with by *The Big Flame*, the betrayal of the working-classes, was to become an ongoing motif of Loach's work. Together with this attack on institutions a respect for the dignity of the workers and their meetings can be sensed. These where they discuss the actions to take, would also become a distinguished strategy employed by this filmmaker. Another interesting device is the way that voice-off remarks are used in order to explain the context and thus to save time.

Together with Tony Garnett and Jim Allen, Ken Loach managed to produce a strikingly political piece of work. The attacks made by the Conservative press and the difficulties caused by the BBC's hierarchy are not surprising since *The Big Flame* is, perhaps, the play with the strongest political content in the BBC's history. Ken Loach wanted to show the other side, the plight of the dockers, without the interference of soft spoken Labour politicians and union's officers committed to the status quo. In this, Loach connects with the British realist tradition of unveiling working-class life. But, at the same time, Loach depicts the struggle of the working-classes against everybody else, it is an "us against them" situation and the director does not shy away from illustrating which side he is on. Whereas John Grierson described working-class life, Humphrey Jennings depicted an almost classless society and the New Wave filmmakers showed the bitterness of the working-class youth, Ken Loach demonstrates the struggle of the working-class and their betrayal in nearly classical Marxist terms.

As said before, Loach is moving further away from *Nouvelle Vague* conventions towards a more documentary look. In fact, *The Big Flame* has a distinct and sharp look, with the camera being far away from the action and with lots of overlapping dialogue. The casting also indicates this movement towards documentary for most of the actors are relatively inexperienced or even real dockers. The method that Loach uses with the actors in this play will be used in his subsequent work as a distinctive feature of his style that can be summed up by this remark in the interview conducted by John Hill, "There are

obviously little tricks of the trade to try and make it look as though it is happening for the first time, but it's set up like a piece of fiction" (169). As Raymond Williams states in "A Lecture on Realism", this method:

> is authentic in that it is the accent and the mode of speech of men reproducing their real-life situations. It is also rehearsed in that it is predetermined what they will say at that point and in what relation to each other (72).

The employment of non-professional actors is connected with a mixture of rehearsal and improvisation, that is, the scenes are written down, but the actors are encouraged to put something of their life experience in the characters; Loach defends the view that sheer improvisation would probably lead to stiffness and awkwardness. The director also has the habit of releasing only small parts of the script at a time, impeding actors from rehearsing the scenes thoroughly. This hybrid method is probably the cause of the raw but secure performances by the actors. In Loach's films and plays the actors are not as stiff as those in *Night Mail* nor as well-rehearsed and knowing as stage professionals.

Situating Loach within the British "realist" tradition poses the question of how his works can be formally defined. In "Naturalism, Narration and Critical Perspective", Deborah Knight states emphatically , "Ken Loach's films are naturalistic" (60). By saying this, Deborah Knight links his work with that of the naturalistic tradition that began with Émile Zola. As Linda Nochlin states in *Realism*, the French novelist's experimental method was concerned with "characters on the margins of society" and he consistently examines "the inexorable depredations of an unjust social system" (48). Obviously, Loach's films deal with society's injustices towards its less favoured members and the symptomatic treatment of working-class subjects brings him close to Zola and his studies of the human condition under strained and appalling conditions.

Deborah Knight defines the British "realist" tradition as naturalistic and includes Ken Loach in this group. The reasons why she connects the filmmakers studied here with the naturalistic mode (as defined by Zola) are to be found in: "location shooting" (66); the "unheroic or anti-heroic protagonists" (67); the "contemporary settings" (67); an emphasis on the "decay [and the] squalor" (74); and "deterministic" plot structures (74). *Up the*

Junction, *Cathy Come Home* and *The Big Flame* all have the characteristics enunciated above; all these plays were shot on location and described the life of ordinary people in an urban and contemporary setting defined by a poverty from which they cannot escape.

Unresolved and deterministic plots are a crucial characteristic of Loach's plays; none of those quoted above has a closed resolution and the characters do not see their situation resolved[24]. To Deborah Knight this is a clear naturalistic convention for "the point of these narratives is not to present and resolve a problem, but to make plain the nature of the problem and its consequences in terms of character's lives" (78). In an attempt to steer Loach's work (and Zola's) away from accusations of "being formally unable to deal with contradiction" (69) because of its commitment to "an empirical notion of truth"[25], she emphasised this characteristic of the director's work. For her the fact that the image shows one thing and the characters say another (as in *The Big Flame*, where one manager is saying that the army will not attack the dockers at the same time that the attack is shown) revealed the vitality of a form concerned with "social processes, with political processes, with the courses of events" (71). Arguably, this concern is the most vigorous device used by Ken Loach (and Tony Garnett) in pointing the finger at what is wrong.

This concern with the wrongdoings of society, this morality is reminiscent of the 1930s socially-concerned intellectuals and their portrayals of working-class miseries. These plays contributed to the establishment of a tradition of socially aware television plays and for the acceptance of documentary drama as a genre. Ken Loach continued to work within the *Wednesday Play* (later, *Play for Today*) slot and managed to stir great amounts of controversy and, at same time, praise for his politically challenging plays. Unfortunately, restrictive agreements between the Unions and the BBC prevented these plays of being widely available to the general public. Only extremely successful plays, like *Cathy Come Home*, would be transmitted more than once. As will be seen later, only in 1982 with the advent of Channel 4 would television-produced films and plays be available to theatrical (and video) release.

John Caughie, in "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama", claims that:

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[24] It can be claimed that the only Ken Loach film to have a happy ending is *Raining Stones* (1993), but even here the social conditions are not resolved.

[25] Deborah Knight was referring to Colin MacCabe's article "Realism and Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses" *(Screen*, vol. 15, no 2. 1974) 7-2. cited in the previous chapter. This article was a part of a polemic between Colin MacCabe and Colin MacArthur in the pages of the film journal *Screen* concerning Ken Loach's four-part play *Days of Hope* (1975).

> Documentary drama seems to […] have occupied a progressive role within television insofar as it has introduced into the discourses of television a repressed political, social discourse which may contribute to an audience's political formation (34).

The progressive stance of these plays is connected with the political situation of the time for, as Caughie notes, "the programmes are made within basically conservative institutions" (33), which is evocative of the situation John Grierson had to deal with at the GPO and EMB. Apart from their technical and formal validity, these documentary drama plays had a strong political content that cannot be underestimated, especially if one takes into account the institution where they were being produced. That is why, in "Ken Loach: Histories and Contexts", Stuart Laing, states that the appointment of Sydney Newman as Head of BBC Drama brought changes that, "in many ways only [had] a parallel […] [with] the changes which had already taken place in the British theatre with *Look Back in Anger* in 1956" (14). This was due to Sydney Newman's investment in collaborators trained in the theatre and the film business and his belief that television drama was more than photographed theatre.

Television was the medium where Ken Loach succeeded in creating a personal style, but at the same time he directed plays for the BBC he managed to complete a few films. After the unrewarding and straining experience of directing *Poor Cow* with the constant interference of his producer Joseph Janni, Loach created his own production company, Kestrel Films together with Tony Garnett and with Woodfall's support. The first production of this new company was *Kes* (1969) a tale of a young boy from Barnsley that adopts a wounded kestrel, thus establishing a special relation with the bird. Billy, marvellously played by David Bradley, virtually refuses education at the local school, which, though inadequate, is never shown as wholly awful. Encouraged by a sympathetic teacher, he finds some sort of hope in his new interest, even though social deprivation is always likely to stamp it out.

The remarkable, and sometimes comic, scenes of school life bring a lively perspective to the film. One particularly striking scene has ex-wrestler Brian Glover as the sports teacher taking his boys out on to the field and, to the BBC's old *Sports Night* signature tune, acting out a football fantasy, much to the bemusement of the soaked kids.

The boy finds a purpose in life, a distraction, from the dreary landscape and his poor future perspectives. All his hopes are subsequently thwarted by his older brother who kills the bird and ends Billy's dream.

The Barry Hines scripted story is symptomatic of Loach's emphasis on the less favoured sides of society. The representation of the bird is quite symbolic, not only because of its association with freedom, but also, because of the fact that, in the Middle-Ages, these were the only birds that the peasants were allowed to own. Once again, Loach succeeds in extracting striking performances from his untrained actors, especially in case of David Bradley who stands for all the kids in Northern towns destined for unskilled labour. This film is clearly influenced by Italian Neo-realism and even the director acknowledges this. The employment of non-professional actors and the straightforward plot give this film its strength and show the Griersonian predicament of respecting the people.

Ken Loach also acknowledged the importance that the Czech New Wave had on his work, and particularly on this film. The film was photographed by Chris Menges who had worked with Miroslav Ondricek on Lindsay Anderson's *If…*, and its sharp and clear images show this influence. In *Loach on Loach*, the director states that the unobtrusive camera work was:

> a reaction to some of the work in Poor Cow, which […] had become mannered […]. The style of Kes was a consequence of seeing Czech cinema, which made me feel that some of the stuff we'd been working on was a little shallow (38).

This film takes a formal step forward from the documentary drama conventions and implies a more direct commitment to the everyday life of working-class communities. This commitment is shown by the casting of the people from the community, a technique Loach has not abandoned to this day[26]. Arguably, this factor contributed to the film's extremely low-budget of £157.000 which was easily recouped for the film was a box-office success. The film caused quite a stir and, surprisingly for a Ken Loach film, did not attract many criticisms from the Conservative press. The film's importance is probably best expressed

[26] One of his more recent films, *My Name is Joe* (1998), casts the inhabitants of a Glasgow council-estate as the players of the football team that Joe coaches.

by the fact that it is now studied at Key Stage 3 (English), as part of the Britain's National Curriculum.

His next film would be *Family Life* (1971), an extension of the David Mercer-scripted television play *In Two Minds* (1967), in which the author put into practice the theories of the polemical psychiatrist R.D. Laing[27]. The film's plot concerns the descent into madness of Janice, because of her parents' failure to recognise her problems. Janice's parents start to disapprove of their daughter's behaviour and the company she keeps and, when her mother forces her to have an abortion, she becomes seriously depressed. In spite of her problems, the work of a comprehensive and revolutionary psychiatrist leads her, and her parents, to an understanding of their problems. But eventually the psychiatrist is dismissed and the other doctors resort to electro-shock therapy, which aggravates Janice's condition.

The film is constructed around interviews, which set the background for the narrative to unveil. Dr. Donaldson challenges Janice's parents to recreate their family life and by the reconstructions and the attitude displayed by them, the viewer is induced to perceive Janice's problems as derived from her parents' strictness and failure to connect with their children. One of the most striking tropes of this film is when Janice's sister confronts their parents and accuses them of destroying both their lives. The accent is placed on the failure to communicate and the problems arising from the generation gap. This film might be perceived as a continuation of the New Wave features that dealt with youth's anxiety and alienation. Again, social institutions are under attack for not being able to continue to provide good treatment for mental health patients; Dr. Donaldson's dismissal is seen as a managerial decision, a way of saving money, which leads to the appointment of a near sadistic psychiatrist to deal with Janice. This new doctor eschews the interviews in favour of shock therapy, which is clearly an impersonal and cruel way of dealing with these patients.

The liveliness of the interviews and the uneasiness is probably derived from the fact that Dr. Donaldson, the Laingian psychiatrist, is played by a real doctor, Mike Riddall,

[27] Ronald David Laing, was one of the most controversial figures of 20th Century psychology and philosophy. His writings were an enticing mix of psychoanalysis, mysticism, existentialism and left-wing politics. He was especially opposed to the use of lobotomies, ECT and the dehumanising effects of incarceration in psychiatric hospitals. See R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Penguin, 1990).

who successfully drew out the real personalities of the other actors. This sense of documentary is heightened by the casting of Grace Cave as the mother; Ken Loach "found" her at the ladies' committee of the Walthamstow Conservative Association. In *Loach on Loach*, the director acknowledges that Grace Cave was being herself and "didn't believe that it was the mother's fault that the daughter was ill, because there were outside influences at work on her" (45).

In spite of the mother being the cause of Janice's illness, it is the mental institution's failure that drives her to new depths. This criticism of social institutions is reminiscent of *Cathy Come Home*, and George McKnight in "Ken Loach's Domestic Morality Tales", argues that these films:

> suggest how a conjunction of social and economic conditions, contingent events in the lives of those with minimal resources, and social policies that further marginalise those in need, can destroy the ideals a culture has constructed around romantic love, marriage and family life (91).

The struggles going inside the institutions are connected with family conflicts and the violence displayed by Janice's father is paralleled to the shock therapy. It can be contended that the films discussed here revolve around a dialectical struggle between two opposing forces: the family versus the social institutions and the workers versus union leaders. This dialectical struggle is embodied by people trying to maintain their dignity under the most adverse conditions and Janice stands for the victims of state bureaucracy. In *Family Life*, the contingencies of modern life prevent the family, which is perceived as the place of socialisation, from fulfilling its role in forming able and healthy individuals. It can be asserted that these attacks on social institutions represent a wider attack on a welfare state that is not fulfilling its duties. *Family Life* was not successful at the box-office and Loach had to wait till the 1980s to complete another film. Only the advent of Channel 4 in 1982, allowed Loach to direct further feature films.

2. Mike Leigh

At about the same time Loach was completing *Family Life,* a young theatre director named Mike Leigh managed to secure a minimum budget to produce his first film, *Bleak Moments.* Mike Leigh was born in Salford in a Jewish family; his father was a doctor that had his practice in a working-class district of Manchester. In spite of having theatre training, and studying at RADA, he always wanted to enter the film world. He failed in his first attempts to become accepted at the BBC and directed a number of small plays, mostly in the London area. One of Leigh's trademarks was absolute control over all the productions he made. From the casting of the actors, to the sets and script development everything went under his supervision. His experimental mode of creating plays was also characteristic: he begins with an idea and brings in some actors to share his thoughts on the project he is trying to develop. After a series of rehearsals and improvisation, he and the actors start to develop the characters and the dialogues. Often the actors are separated from each others in order not to know what is happening in other character's development. Mike Leigh usually sends the actors shopping in the same stores where the characters would be likely to shop and asks them to train in the character's jobs. This process takes months, for each actor, together with the director, has to expand the character's life. This means that the director often makes the actors "live" situations that supposedly had happen in the character's lives.

This method puts a great strain on the actors because of all the energy that they have put into enduring the long and hard rehearsals. Sometimes an actor with a small part has to rehearse and develop thoroughly his or her character even if his or her participation is small or insignificant[28]. In terms of filmmaking, one of the main problems that this approach brings is the way film funding works; it is very hard for someone without a script to get money to produce a film. As Leigh starts his process of creation with only a rudimentary idea of what he wants to do, it is not hard to imagine the problems he has in order to get money for his projects. Not only does this different way of creating a film or a play get Leigh into trouble, but also the subject matter and the plots turn most financial backers away. As Michael Coveney affirms in *The World According to Mike Leigh*, in

[28] A good example is *Life is Sweet* (1990), where David Thewlis had to undergo a long creative process with the director and his part turned out to be very small. Mike Leigh acknowledges that one of the main reasons for casting Thewlis in *Naked* (1993) as the main character, derived from his debt to the actor.

order to complete a project, "He has had to knock on doors, write grovelling letters, fill the gap in somebody's else schedule at the last minute, apply for financial pittances, endure endless humiliations" (131).

Like many of his generation, Mike Leigh was profoundly struck by New Wave films and the way they depicted the lives of ordinary people. In an interview conducted by Jay Carr he states that:

> The reality for me – when films appeared in the late '50s like Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* – was that they fulfilled what I'd felt throughout the decade as an avid, movie-watching kid, which is, 'Why can't people in movies be like real people?' That was the jumping-off point, that's where it comes from (58).

This desire to see "real people" in films will lead Leigh to concentrate on powerful portraits of the working and lower-middle classes. Despite recognising the influences these films had on him, Leigh's method moves him forward, basically because all of his films are original ideas, whereas the New Wave filmmakers worked with literary adaptations. This factor will contribute to a very personal and controversial style. Leigh also claims to be influenced by the work of Jean Renoir with its deconstruction of the petite bourgeois lifestyle and its powerful ensemble acting and also, by the work of the Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray.

Despite these influences, Leigh can most readily be compared to Yasujiro Ozu, a Japanese director that specialized in the specific genre of *shomin-geki,* a type of social comedies concentrated on the daily lives of the members of lower-middle-class families. This preoccupation with these people's routine lives is characteristic of Japanese film culture and their ability to cope with hardship is thoroughly respected in Ozu's work. These domestic tales are directly comparable with Mike Leigh's fixation with their British counterparts and their everyday struggles.

Being a man from the theatre, in an interview conducted by Graham Fuller in *Naked and other Screenplays*, he affirms that some of his main influences are "Beckett and Pinter, Brecht, Joan Littlewood and Peter Brook" (xiii). After directing Pinter's *The Caretaker* at RADA, Leigh became mesmerised by the work of this playwright at the same time he discovered the plays of the absurdist Samuel Beckett. All these references are

essential to understand his work as a film director and to comprehending his focus on the ordinary aspects of life that become themselves comedies of the absurd. It can be argued that Mike Leigh developed his sharp sense of humour and wit by working and reading the texts of these two authors and from his Mancunian background.

This director's long experience within the world of experimental theatre productions in London permitted him to hone his peculiar style and he managed to transpose the play *Bleak Moments* (1971) to the screen by securing a financing deal supported by fellow Salfordian, Albert Finney and the BFI Production Board. The budget was so ridiculously low (£18.500) that he had to work with film stock leftovers from other films. For a first work the film exudes a strong emotional tone with the portrayal of the miseries of human relationships. The story revolves around Sylvia, her retarded sister Hilda, her would-be lover Peter and Norman, a hippie singer. The film progresses with the relationship between Sylvia and Peter, a hapless schoolteacher who resists Sylvia's advances. He emerges as a comic exposure of English repression, not being able to deal with new emotions or intimate situations. The key scene of the film is when she makes a sexual advance on him; in this long and slow-paced scene he strenuously repels her attempts to seduce him and he appears extremely timid and insecure. Nonetheless, he acknowledges Sylvia's advances and punishes himself for not responding to her. She comes out as more sexually alive and desperately tries to get something out of her relationship with him other than mere friendship. But Sylvia is also portrayed as an alcoholic needing a drink before any social contact. She seems more capable of social interaction than Peter but, probably, her lack of inhibition in part is due to alcohol consumption.

This film presents the viewer with a gallery of emotionally inept characters that are trapped in their suburban and bleak lives. Hilda's existence is clearly hopeless and miserable but the other characters do not have a better life than her. Norman is a nervous and extremely insecure folk singer, whose biggest project is a fanzine and who reluctantly accepts her invitation for tea. Sylvia's colleague from work also leads a desperate life and is tyrannized by her mother and only finds solace in Hilda's company. In spite of the desperation that pervades this film, there are some moments when characters seem to relate. For instance, in the scenes where Norman plays the guitar and sings there is a certain feeling of warmth and community, as if those characters were united in a makeshift

family. This film has a hopeless tone and, in the end, everything stays the same: Norman moves out, Peter goes on with his teaching and Sylvia nurses Hilda. As argued before, this film is a study of English emotional repression and this is expressed lucidly by Sylvia's remark to Peter: "If we could ever get around touching one another, it wouldn't be a bad thing." For such a low-budget film, *Bleak Moments* succeeded in launching an author with a strong personal style which is not common in inexperienced filmmakers. Certainly, Leigh's experience in the theatre helped to imbue the film with strong representations of petty, suburban lives.

His next project would mark his entrance into the television world. Tony Garnett, impressed by *Bleak Moments*, offered Leigh the chance to work within the BBC and produced his television play, *Hard Labour* (1973). Sometimes there is the temptation to compare Ken Loach and Mike Leigh and consider them as similar type of director, working in similar fields. Undoubtedly, the fact that both of them oscillated between television and film and both worked under the auspices of Tony Garnett, associates their work and the constant use of working and lower-middle-classes settings connects them to the British "realist" tradition. Also, both directors tend to use a relatively unobtrusive camera style and let the action unfold without the use of superfluous stylistic flourishes. Probably, their biggest difference lies in the way both deal with the travails of the working-classes and the consequences for ordinary people of political decisions destined to hamper the welfare state. Whereas Ken Loach has a clear political agenda and his films are often accused of didacticism and political preaching, Mike Leigh tends to address these problems in a more covert and subtle way and is consequently accused of being patronising by the hard left. This accusation is regularly levelled at Mike Leigh's plays and films because he does not simply portray working-class characters as inherently positive and heroic. Whereas Ken Loach's working-class characters are depicted in a positive and constructive manner, Mike Leigh's characters are not one-dimensional and have serious flaws. In Leigh's work there are always several perspectives from which a character can be judged.

Despite the fact that both directors use improvisation as a method, their creative process is clearly divergent. Ken Loach always works with writers who adapt an existing story into a filmic script and rehearses the scenes. He always allows the actors to put something of their experience in the dialogues (this is one of the reasons he resorts to non-

professional actors). This is done to downgrade the role of "acting" in order to achieve a more naturalistic style. In contrast, Mike Leigh always develops his script within the improvisation process with the actors (hence the famous credit, "Devised and Directed by Mike Leigh"). As will be seen later this method led to accusations of caricature and over-the-top, histrionic performances.

It is important to stress Mike Leigh's and Ken Loach's importance within the tradition discussed here. Both of them maintained a consistent set of styles and concerns throughout the different places they worked, and both directors still produce films that express the same preoccupations about and care for society's outcasts. Both directors also tend towards a documentary look in their productions. Loach tries to depict the events in front of the camera neutrally, that is, he aims towards an unobtrusive camera style that gives the impression of an unmediated episode occurring by accident. Leigh also tries to engender an illusion of reality, a suspended belief in which the filmic events are merged and confused with reality. Interviewed by Peter Brunette, he states that:

> We should aspire to the condition of documentary. By which I mean that when you shoot documentary, you do not question that the world you're pointing a camera at actually exists in three dimensions and that it would exist whether you filmed it or not (32).

This statement can explain Leigh's obsession with detail, especially as it relates to character's lives, and the need to create a credible world where the characters reflect ordinary people in their routine lives. These features can be encapsulated in three emphasis that are present in the films which belong to the documentary-realist tradition discussed here: a documentary-realist aesthetic defined by unobtrusive camera work and economy of means; a certain liberal/leftist political position dedicated to the denunciation of social injustices and their effects on people's lives; a class-based subject matter that rarely steps out of working or lower-middle-classes environments.

Shot on location in Salford, *Hard Labour* is a good example of a created world deeply rooted in the director's own life. The plot unfolds around the Thornley family: Mrs Thornley who works as a domestic servant in a Jewish middle-class family, her husband who is always moaning and bad-tempered, her daughter who as struck up friendship with a Pakistani cabdriver. Mrs Thornley is constantly put upon by her husband and her employer

and, although she is presented throughout the film doing domestic work, her life is not strictly defined by her job and she appears as a sympathetic person, always keen to help anyone. As usual, Mike Leigh tends to surprise the audience by showing absurd or obsessed behaviour, as when Mr Thornley is seen complaining and ranting about a pair of shoes with Mr Philips, a tallyman. The play delivers a series of social interactions that seem never to function in a normal emotional way. The conversations between Mr and Mrs Thornley, between Mr Thornley and his supervisor, between Mrs Thornley and the Stones are depicted as a series of cold exchanges involving people that apparently are failing to connect.

Most of the family conversations are arguments between Mr Thornley and his daughter, who is also characterised as horrible and selfish. When she tries to help a friend to have an abortion she is assisted by Naseem who seems cool and sensible. His pragmatic tone and disengagement contrast with Ann's worries. As Mrs Thornley, Liz Smith captures perfectly the dilemma of an uneducated working woman in the world as we find it. The play ends with her confessing to a priest that she does not like people enough and that she does not like her husband to touch her. Her life is so bleak that she cannot feel any human warmth and yet she feels she is the one to blame and duly confesses her sin. A feeling of lack of intimacy pervades this play; because of their work, Mr and Mrs Thornley only sleep together once a week and the only close contact that they have is when Mrs Thornley massages her husband's sore shoulder. Because of its raw look this scene lacks any sense of sensuality, and so represents the lack of love and respect between these characters. The priest seems exasperated by Mrs Thornley's confession and appropriately sends her away with some minor penance to do. In the next scene, she is seen cleaning a window, that is, her life has not changed a bit and there is no hope for redemption.

Hard Labour synthesises some of Leigh's creative features: the opposition between flexible and inflexible characters (Naseem and Mr Thornley), the constant jeopardising of relations and situations by the introduction of new facts that challenge viewer's received ideas about the characters (the scene between Mr Thornley and Mr Shore) and the bleak life of emotionally repressed characters in their downbeat existence. This play has an intrinsic value as a document of Salford life. The action develops in the places where the director grew up and some characters are clearly connected with real persons that Mike Leigh knew. For instance, the Stones' home is related to is own Jewish middle-class

environment and the tallyman is inspired by an uncle of his. Despite the fact that this play was shot a few streets away from *Coronation Street* set at Granada Studios, it is nevertheless too uneventful and too deadpan to be read as a soap opera.

Leigh's following work for the BBC was *Nuts in May* (1975), a comic study of an urban middle-class couple coming to terms with nature, camping and people. This play is a critique of the upcoming New Age craze and its half-baked mystical ideas and pacifist vegetarian faddism. Essentially, the plot concerns Keith and Candice-Marie Pratt's adventures on a camping trip to the west-country and their failure to connect with, understand and tolerate other people. Keith and Candice-Marie, interpreted by Leigh's long-time wife, Alison Steadman, have to deal with Ray and a biker couple, Honkey and Finger. Keith gets annoyed by Ray's disrespecting of the campsite rules and by the cheerful and loud bikers. But, what really infuriates Keith is Candice-Marie's interest in Ray. When she goes to his tent, Keith's jealousy reveals itself. Clearly, he is unable to deal with his jealousy and this will set off his verbal attack on Ray and subsequent physical attack on the bikers. Despite her dowdy clothes, Candice-Marie emerges as a sensual woman who stirs sexual competition between two males. This has the effect of releasing Keith's repressed emotions when he "assaults" Finger with a limp twig and has a crying fit. Unable to understand the well-springs of his own sexual jealousy as his own over-controlling nature, with its tendency to violence, Keith has his hysterical outburst and then returns absolutely unchanged to type. This state of affairs can be read as another study of British sexual/emotional repression, for despite the passions aroused no personality change or enlightenment is possible or imaginable.

The couple becomes a symbol for society's shallowness and the play is a critique of the self-assured lower-middle-class suburban people that try to justify their existence by going to the country in search of their spiritual roots. As Ray Carney writes in *The Films of Mike Leigh*:

> Keith and Candice Marie's dietary and behavioral eccentricities are symptoms of a state of imaginative derangement that, in Leigh's view, runs through society. They have become cut off from their own experience by culturally received ideas and emotions (80).

This critique of middle-class "deferred gratification" and repression of instinct is present in several of Mike Leigh's works. He often shows the falsity and emptiness of people that try to follow trends without making an effort to understand them. In *Nuts in May*, this is detected by the way the director contrasts what Keith and Candice-Marie see and say and what he shows. When they go to a farm asking for unpasteurized milk and praise the farm for its rustic pureness, the images show the farm as a dirty, noisy and mechanised place without any hint of poetry. It can be argued that this ironic displacement serves to emphasise Keith and Candice-Marie's hollowness and fake lifestyle.

Ray, Honkey and Finger seem to enjoy country life in a manner Keith can never achieve, but even these characters have a very limited understanding of what country life really is. Their trip to the country is only a brief escapade from the drabness of city life, but, in the end, they are only a little less inadequate than Keith. Leigh usually make his characters interact in exactly the kind of situations they detest and abhor. For instance, Keith does not like noise, so in the film he has to deal with two noisy bikers and a loud radio[29]. In this manner, the characters are continuously tested and have to deal with their own problems and usually the result is emotional breakdown and hysteria as they come into terms with the reality of conflict. Having said that, it is necessary to stress that, in Mike Leigh's films and plays, there are not clear divisions between right or wrong and hero or villain.

Abigail's Party (1977) would take these premises to the limit. If *Nuts in May* was a success, *Abigail's Party* achieved instant cult status, leading people to stage representations of it within circles of friends. The play originated at the Hampstead Theatre and its success made Leigh transpose it to television for the *Play for Today* slot at BBC2. Aesthetically, this play suffers from its recording method; the production was a rushed affair done in a studio, this is why the lighting is brash and artificial and there are lots of shadows from the microphone booms. Nonetheless, its immediate success was undoubtedly due to its crude representation of several suburban types and the wonderful performance of Alison Steadman as Beverly, the hostess of a hellish party. Central to the plot is Beverly's scorning of her husband and her constant attempts to seduce Tony who is married to Angela, a mawkish nurse that talks too much. Lawrence, Beverly's husband, is

[29] In *Grown-Ups* (1980), a middle-class couple of teachers has to live next door to a couple of former pupils creating a tense atmosphere. In *High Hopes* (1988) a nasty, insensitive yuppie couple has to take care of an old lady and their discomfort in having to deal with someone that does not share their interests is obvious.

portrayed as a real estate agent impressed by the cultural interests of the middle-classes. He tries to impress Sue (who is at Beverly's party because her daughter Abigail is having her own with her friends over the road) with his hardback collection of Shakespeare and Dicken's works. But this only functions to depict him as a cultural philistine when he claims that "of course, you can't actually read them".

Beverly takes charge of the party and tries to boss everyone around. She complains that her husband does not care about her and makes him run several errands; she tries to seduce Tony at the same time she gives beauty tips to his wife and interrogates Sue about the failure of her marriage and about Abigail's male friends. Beverly appears as perhaps the most monstrous character in all of Leigh's plays and films discussed here, and as Carney writes, "There is something artificial, imitated, derivative, or inauthentic about virtually every line of dialogue Beverly utters" (100-1). As usual every character has a flaw of some kind. Whereas Lawrence plays the Professor role, Beverly plays the hostess role. Angela is too garrulous and her husband treats her in an authoritarian manner. Sue is always worrying about her daughter and by showing up at the party she appears as if she is doing a favour to Beverly. This play has the same structure as *Nuts in May*, that is, two contrasting couples and a single person that becomes the centre of dispute between them. The suburban and nuanced class characterisation is one of the strongest points of the play. This play can be interpreted as another critique on lower and middle-class social repression of natural instincts. What becomes apparent is their need to perform the roles bestowed upon them, and to obey received conventions of how to behave in a social situation.

Despite its enormous success (it was viewed by sixteen million spectators), this play became the base for several attacks on Mike Leigh's style and method. According to Michael Coveney, Dennis Potter, in a review column of the *Sunday Times*, interpreted the play as a supercilious attack on suburban lower-middle-class life and taste (120). Because of his use of humour Mike Leigh is often accused of caricature and condescension towards his characters. These accusations seem to reveal an anxiety towards problematic and multi-dimensional portrayals of a substantial part of the British population, the so-called low orders. For Martyn Audy in "But is it Cinema?", these plays "have consolidated Leigh's reputation as the keenest analyst of the contemporary anguish felt, but rarely voiced, by the most oppressed sector of the population" (64-5). Essentially, these plays and films are a vehicle for the analysis of British emotional restraint and its consequences in everyday life.

But, Leigh's world is a pessimistic one for, after the catharsis, life goes on as usual, nothing really changes. In Leigh's plays and films, actors are sometimes accused of giving histrionic and over-the-top performances, but the long improvisation sessions lead inevitably to the stress out of these characters' particularities. The director defends himself from these charges by stating that people are actually like that: there are women as dull and dominating as Beverly, there are men as hopeless and ghastly as Mr Thornley.

It can be maintained that Mike Leigh's work seems to oscillate between the tragic and the comic aspects of ordinary people's lives. In *Abigail's Party,* all the comedy and banter leads to a tragic end when, unable to cope, Lawrence dies of a heart attack. Interviewed by Prairie Miller, Leigh remembers why he wanted to become a filmmaker:

> My grandfather was carried downstairs in a coffin by four old men with drips at the end of their noses. And my response to this tragic-comic occasion was the thought that it would be great to make a film about this (82).

Certainly, this scene would not be out of place in one of Mike Leigh's studies of lower-middle-class life and people's propensity to behave absurdly even in the face of tragic events.

Conclusion

The late 1970s saw Margaret Thatcher ascend to power and the political and social context become very unfavourable to independent filmmakers. The deliberate neglect of the welfare state together with an emphasis on the market to regulate and effectively determine all social life brought many changes to Britain. The reduction in the interventionist and the regulatory role of government led to the suppression of many the taxes and regulations which had supplied the arts. This deregulation of the market was extremely harmful for film producers, for one of the first measures taken by the Conservative government was to extinguish the Eady Levy[30].

The 1980s would prove a harsh time for both Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. Their commitment to producing personal, polemical and innovative work was seriously thwarted by the social and political climate of the decade. Leonard Quart, in "The Religion of the Market: Thatcherite Politics and the British Film of the 1980s", describes Thatcher's social beliefs:

> Thatcher envisioned people's social class position more as a situation to be changed than as a historically fixed one. She was, however, no egalitarian; for example, she opposed redistributive programs, seeing little need to soften the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished or to cushion the social and economic pain of those who failed in the painful struggle for economic success (18).

Of course, this way of thinking was diametrical opposed to that of Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. These directors' financial problems would be coupled with the threat of political censorship, especially for Loach who faced an overt case of censorship with his documentary *Which Side Are You On?* (1984), which London Weekend Television refused to transmit. Loach turned to documentary filmmaking hoping to address the political changes of that time in a more direct way than he had managed to with his films and television plays. Only in 1986 did he manage to direct a full length feature film again, *Fatherland*, and this was substantially funded by and set in West Germany.

[30] A levy by the British government on all cinema admissions and placed in a fund to support British film-making, named after the Treasury official, Wilfred Eady, responsible for its introduction. Started by the Labour government in 1950, firstly on a voluntary basis in return for a reduction in entertainment tax, then made statutory in 1957, the fund was distributed to producers according to box-office returns through the National Film Finance Corporation.

Mike Leigh continued to work within the BBC and directed a play, *Grown-Ups* (1980), that was quite similar to his previous work. Then he tangled with Conservative sensibilities and with BBC's nervous Governors with his Northern Ireland film *4 Days in July* (1984). Only in 1988, seventeen years after *Bleak Moments*, did he secure a deal to direct *Home Sweet Home*. Interestingly, both these directors managed to keep working due to the creation of Channel 4 in 1982. The purpose of this channel was to commission work from independent producers, thus permitting these producers to exist alongside the big production companies. What happened was that films were being produced with the support of a network, but outside it. Channel 4 executives succeeded in changing a union agreement that did not allow work made for television to be released theatrically, as was the case in the 1960s and 1970s at the BBC. The close relationship between film and television, cemented in the 1970s with the work of Leigh and Loach, continued under the auspices of a channel dedicated to showing alternative tastes and trends. Paul Giles, in "History with Holes: Channel Four Television Films of the 1980s", writes that:

> Channel Four […] institutionalised this close relationship between television and film production, both in the "Film on Four" series and, later on, through the channel's financial investment in feature films under the "Film Four International" umbrella (73).

The extraordinary importance this channel had on film production in Britain is clarified by the number of films made with its partial or total support. Both *High Hopes*[31] and *Hidden Agenda* were financed by Channel 4 and this support still prevails. Once again there was a public institution financing radical and innovative work clearly critical of the government. Not only Leigh, Loach and the documentary realists benefited from Channel 4's money, so too did Stephen Frears's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1983) and Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio* (1986). These are a few examples of films that were only possible because of the channel's support and this deal between film producers and the network provided these films with unusually high viewing figures for British films. Unusually, because many of these films were radical and experimental works that often dealt with controversial and distressing themes. Between 1981 and 1990, Channel 4 partially funded the production of 170 films,

[31] Before *High Hopes*, Leigh had directed *Meantime* (1983) for Carlton Television, but it was completed just before the negotiations with the unions ended, so it was never released theatrically.

thus becoming the major player in British film industry[32]. Nonetheless, by Hollywood standards, the budgets for these films were extremely low.

Towards the end of the 1980s and on through the 1990s, the financial support provided by Channel 4, coupled with co-production deals, was responsible for the international recognition that Mike Leigh and Ken Loach obtained. Mike Leigh made a series of critically successful films including *Life is Sweet* (1990), *Naked* (1993), *Secrets and Lies* (1996) and *Career Girls* (1998), establishing himself as one of the most famous British filmmakers and achieving a cult following in some European countries and the United States. Ken Loach also produced some relatively successful films, such as *Riff-Raff* (1991), *Raining Stones* (1993), *Land and Freedom* (1995) and *My Name is Joe* (1998). Many of these films received awards at important film festivals (Cannes and Berlin) and contributed to the international recognition of the British documentary-realist film tradition; Leigh and Loach are automatically associated with quality and socially committed filmmaking by many film enthusiasts around the world.

Due to John Grierson, Humphrey Jennings, Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson, Ken Loach, Mike Leigh and others, the British documentary-realist tradition is still alive and there are several contemporary directors clearly indebted to it. Shane Meadows' *TwentyFourSeven* (1997), Gary Oldman's *Nil by Mouth* (1997) and Tim Roth's *The War Zone* (1999)[33] can all be included in this tradition, because of their focusing on social issues within working-class environments. Patrice Chereau's *Intimacy* (2000), scripted by Frears's collaborator Hanif Kureishi, is a proof of these directors' influence on filmmakers across the world. Its story of loneliness and sexual dependency is set in Mike Leigh's London, that is, the locales where the action develops are identifiable in Leigh's films. Also, one of the three main characters is played by Timothy Spall, a regular Leigh associate.

British television continues to present the soap-operas so closely associated with working-class environments. Granada's *Coronation Street* and BBC's *East Enders* still are amongst the most popular shows in British television. Channel 4 also had a soap-opera, *Brookside*, set in one of Liverpool's most squalid locations. But one of the most impressive innovations, and closely-related to the films discussed here, is the BBC's recent sitcom *The*

[32] For a detailed account of these 170 films see John Pym *Film on Four: 1982/1991 A Survey* (London: BFI, 1992).
[33] Both Roth and Oldman had their first leading film roles in Mike Leigh's *Meantime*.

Royle Family (1998). Set in Salford, it depicts the domestic life of an ordinary working-class family, with the action only taking place in the sitting-room and kitchen. Some of the actors made their name in Loach's and Leigh's films such as Liz Smith (*Bleak Moments* and *Hard Labour*) and Ricky Tomlinson (*Riff-Raff* and *Raining Stones*). In spite of having a lighter sitcom tone it is strikingly similar in its visual style to Mike Leigh's *Hard Labour* and *Grown-Ups* in its celebration of the banality of everyday life.

The "realist" aesthetic has become so widely known and appreciated that even some films, which do not share the same grim social concerns as those discussed here, use it for background. For instance, Peter Cataneo's *The Full Monty* (1997) and Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot* (2000) are located in the grimy industrial north and present working-class characters struggling amid the demise of their traditional jobs and communities. What is striking is that these two films are essentially rags-to-riches showbiz success stories not very far away from the Hollywood norm[34] set against a backdrop reminiscent of the British New Wave films, which helps to give gravitas to cheerful and enthusiastic stories of success and determination.

It can be maintained that, due to the continuous flow of films that belong to the documentary-realist tradition and the influence that they still have on various contemporary directors, this tradition is the most vital and valuable in British filmmaking. A cursory trawl through some of these films is sufficient to establish their validity as influential works of art. Undoubtedly, any national filmography would be proud of films such as, *Night Mail*, *Fires Were Started*, *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, *A Taste of Honey*, *Cathy Come Home*, *Kes*, *Bleak Moments*, *Land and Freedom*, *Naked* and *Secrets and Lies*. This tradition functions as transgressive of Hollywood strategies and establishes specific national themes and iconographies. This has lead to distinctions between the "serious" and the "popular", and dismissals of mass production and what is perceived as a standardized and impoverished mass culture. In "Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film", Andrew Higson writes that:

> Each successful realist movement in British cinema and television has been celebrated both for its commitment to the exploration of contemporary social problems, and for its working out of those problems in relation to 'realistic' landscapes and characters (95).

[34] The film *The Full Monty*, actually refers Adrian Lyne's *Flashdance* (1983) as the type of film the putative dancers wish to identify with.

As Higson mentions, these films' strongest point is the way they succeed in negotiating social problems within the framework of enjoyable and well-crafted works of fiction. Having said that, it seems clear that the documentary-realist tradition is successful in its contribution to the idea of a distinctively national and valuable film culture.

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Selected Filmography

Abigail's Party (UK) 1977

BBC TV Play for Today. Director and Script: Mike Leigh. Producer: Margaret Matheson. Cast: Alison Steadman; Tim Stern; Harriet Reynolds; John Salthouse; Thelma Whiteley. 104 min.

A Diary for Timothy (UK) 1945

Crown Film Unit. Director: Humphrey Jennings. Producer: Basil Wright. Commentary: EM Forster, read by Michael Redgrave. Musical Score: Richard Addingold. 40 min.

A Kind of Loving (UK) 1962

Vic/Waterhall. Director: John Schlesinger. Producer: Joseph Janni. Screenplay: Willis Hall, Keith Waterhouse, adapted from a novel by Stan Barstow. Main Cast: Alan Bates; June Ritchie; Thora Hird. 112 min.

A Taste of Honey (UK) 1961

Woodfall. Director and Producer: Tony Richardson. Screenplay: Shelagh Delaney and Tony Richardson, from Delaney's play. Main Cast: Rita Tushingham; Dora Bryan; Robert Stephens; Murray Melvin. 100 min.

Billy Liar (UK) 1963

Vic Films. Director: John Schlesinger. Producer: Joseph Janni. Screenplay: Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, based on the novel by Keith Waterhouse. Main Cast: Tom Courtenay; Julie Christie; Wilfred Pickles; Mona Washbourne. 98 min.

Bleak Moments (UK) 1971

Autumn Productions/Memorial Enterprises/BFI Production Board. Director and Script: Mike Leigh. Producer: Les Blair. Main Cast: Anne Raitt; Sarah Stephenson; Eric Allan; Joolia Cappleman; Mike Bradwell. 111 min.

Cathy Come Home (UK) 1966

BBC TV The Wednesday Play. Director: Ken Loach. Producer: Tony Garnett. Screenplay: Jeremy Sandford. Main Cast: Carol White; Ray Brooks; Winifred Dennis; Phyllis Hickson. 75 min.

Drifters (UK) 1929

Empire Marketing Board. Director: John Grierson. 49 min.

Everyday Except Christmas (UK) 1957

Graphic Films for The Ford Motor Company. Director and Screenplay: Lindsay Anderson. Producers: Leon Clore and Karel Reisz. Commentary: Allun Owen.50 min.

Family Life (UK) 1971

Kestrel Films/Anglo-Amalgamated-EMI. Director: Ken Loach. Producer: Tony Garnett. Screenplay: David Mercer, based on the David Mercer's television play *In Two Minds*. Main Cast: Sandy Radcliff; Bill Dean; Grace Cave; Malcolm Tierney; Michael Riddall. 108 min.

Hard Labour (UK) 1973

BBC TV. Director and Script: Mike Leigh. Producer: Tony Garnett. Main Cast: Liz Smith; Clifford Kershaw; Polly Hemingway; Alison Steadman; Ben Kingsley. 75 min.

Heart of Britain (UK) 1941

Crown Film Unit. Director: Humphrey Jennings. Producer: Ian Dalrymple. 10 min.

Hobson's Choice (UK) 1953

British Lion/London Films/United Artists. Director, Producer and Screenplay: David Lean, based on a play by Harold Brighouse. Main Cast: Charles Laughton; John Mills; Brenda de Banzie: Daphne Anderson. 102 min.

Housing Problems (UK) 1935

British Commercial Gas Association. Directors and Producers: Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey. 15 min.

I Was a Fireman [*Fires Were Started*] (UK) 1942

Crown Film Unit. Director: Humphrey Jennings. Producer: Ian Dalrymple. Musical Score: William Alwyn. 72 min.

Kes (UK) 1969

Woodfall/Kestrel Films. Director: Ken Loach: Producer: Tony Garnett. Screenplay: Barry Hines, Ken Loach and Tony Garnett, based on a novel by Barry Hines. Main Cast: David Bradley; Lynne Perry; Colin Welland; Brian Glover. 113 min.

Listen to Britain (UK) 1942.

Crown Film Unit. Directors: Humphrey Jennings and Stewart McAllister. Producer: Ian Dalrymple. Foreword: Leonard Brockington. 19 min.

Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (UK) 1962

Woodfall. Director and Producer: Tony Richardson. Screenplay: Allan Sillitoe, based on his short story. Main Cast: Tom Courtenay; James Bolam; Avis Bunnage; Michael Redgrave. 104 min.

Look Back in Anger (UK) 1959

Woodfall. Director: Tony Richardson. Producer: Gordon L.T. Scott. Screenplay: Nigel Kneale, from the play by John Osborne. Main Cast: Richard Burton; Claire Bloom; Mary Ure; Gary Raymond. 101 min.

Millions Like Us (UK) 1943

Gainsborough. Directors and Screenplay: Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder. Producer: Edward Black. Main Cast: Eric Portman; Patricia Roc; Gordon Jackson; Anne Crawford. 103 min.

Momma Don't Allow (UK) 1955

BFI Experimental Film Committee. Directors and Producers: Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson. 22 min.

Nanook of the North (USA) 1922

Les Frères Revillon/Pathé Exchange. Director, Producer and Screenplay: Robert J. Flaherty. Musical Score: Stanley Silverman. Cast: Nanook; Nyla; Cunayou; Alle; Allegoo. 79 min.

Night Mail (UK) 1936

General Post Office Film Unit. Directors: Basil Wright and Harry Watt. Producer: John Grierson. Poem and Commentary: WH Auden. Musical Score: Benjamin Britten. 45 min.

Nuts in May (UK) 1976

BBC TV. Director and Script: Mike Leigh. Producer: David Rose. Main Cast: Roger Sloman; Alison Steadman; Anthony O'Donnell; Sheila Kelley; Stephen Bill. 80 min.

O Dreamland (UK) 1953

Sequence. Director and Producer: Lindsay Anderson. 11 min.

Poor Cow (UK) 1967

Vic Films/Frenchurch. Director: Ken Loach. Producer: Joseph Janni. Screenplay: Ken Loach and Nell Dunn, based on her novel. Main Cast: Carol White; Terence Stamp; John Bindon; Kate Williams. 101 min.

Room at the Top (UK) 1959

Remus. Director: Jack Clayton. Producer: John and James Woolf. Screenplay: Neil Patterson, from the novel by John Braine. Main Cast: Laurence Harvey; Simone Signoret; Heather Sears; Donald Wolfit. 117 min.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (UK) 1960

Woodfall. Director: Karel Reisz. Producers: Harry Saltzman and Tony Richardson. Screenplay: Allan Sillitoe, based on his novel. Main Cast: Albert Finney; Shirley Ann Field; Rachel Roberts. 89 min.

Song of Ceylon (UK) 1934

General Post Office Film Unit. Director: Basil Wright. Producer: John Grierson. 38 min.

Spare Time (UK) 1939

General Post Office Film Unit. Director: Humphrey Jennings. Producer: Alberto Cavalcanti. Commentary: Laurie Lee. 14 min.

The Bells Go Down (UK) 1943

Ealing. Director: Basil Dearden. Producer: Michael Balcon. Screenplay: Roger MacDougall. Main Cast: Tommy Trinder; James Mason; Mervyn Johns; Phillip Friend. 90 min.

The Big Flame (UK) 1969

BBC TV Wednesday Play. Director: Ken Loach. Producer: Tony Garnett. Screenplay: Jim Allen. Main Cast: Godfrey Quigley; Norman Rossington; Peter Kerrigan; Ken Jones. 85 min.

The Birth of a Robot (UK) 1935

Shell-Mex. Director and Producer: Len Lye. Colour Décor and Production: Humphrey Jennings. Musical Score: Gustav Holst. 6 min.

The Entertainer (UK) 1960

Woodfall/Holly. Director: Tony Richardson. Producer: Harry Saltzman. Screenplay: Nigel Kneale and John Osborne, adapted from his play. Main Cast: Laurence Olivier; Joan Plowright; Brenda de Banzie; Alan Bates. 96 min.

The Leather Boys (UK) 1963

Raymond Stross. Director: Sidney J. Furie. Producer: Raymond Stross. Screenplay: Gillina Freeman, based on the novel by Eliot George. Main Cast: Rita Tushingham; Colin Campbell; Dudley Sutton; Gladys Henson. 108 min.

This Sporting Life (UK) 1963

Independent Artists. Director: Lindsay Anderson. Producer: Karel Reisz. Screenplay: David Storey, from his novel. Main Cast: Richard Harris; Rachel Roberts; Alan Badel; Wiliam Hartnell. 134 min.

Up the Junction (UK) 1965

BBC TV The Wednesday Play. Director: Ken Loach. Producer: James MacTaggart. Screenplay: Nell Dunn. Main Cast: Carol White; Geraldine Sherman; Vickery Turner; Tony Selby. 72 min.

We Are the Lambeth Boys (UK) 1959

Graphic Films for The Ford Motor Company. Director: Karel Reisz. Producer: Leon Clore. Musical Score: John Dankworth. 50 min.